Robespierre And The Red Terror

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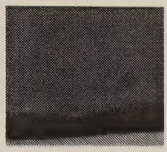

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ROBESPIERRE AND THE RED TERROR

FROM THE DUTCH OF

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PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEYDEN

BY J. HEDEMAN

WITH 16 ILLUSTRATIONS

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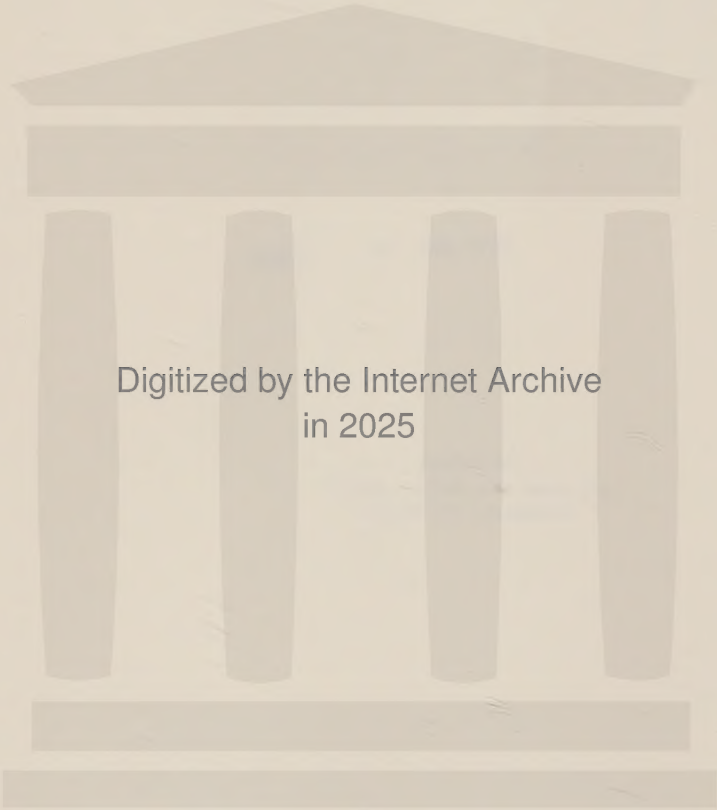
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ROBESPIERRE AND THE RED TERROR

I

APRIL 5TH, 1794

(16 GERMINAL AN II)

AT five o'clock in the evening there was great commotion in the rue Saint-Honoré, or rue Honoré as it is called now, everything connected with saints having been abolished.

Crowds of people were moving in a westerly direction towards the Place de la Révolution (Place de la Concorde), turning from time to time, as in expectation of something to come. The sound of many voices, shouting, shrieking, screeching, was heard in the distance, where a dense throng of idlers and inquisitives formed a sort of procession. Many of the men wore dirty red caps, others black three-cornered hats; the women were mostly bareheaded, or wore high caps of white gauze with a rosette of red, white, and blue ribbon. The noise was deafening.

The guns of the national guards appeared above the heads of the shouting throng, followed by two simply constructed carts drawn by gigantic Normandy greys.

The lower part, consisting of a floor of planks, rested on two high wheels ; fixed to the wooden sides were two rough forms : such was their simple structure.

The executioner's assistant led the horses by the rein. In each of these carts were several men, many of them quite young, their hands firmly bound, their heads uncovered and hair cut short ; they wore neither coat nor *houppelande* (great-coat), but sat in their shirt-sleeves. The national guards protected these tumbrils against the inquisitive jostling of the people.

The rue Saint-Honoré was paved with large, irregular stones, and the noisy and clumsy jolting of the carts continually threw the condemned men against one another. The expressions of their features varied indefinitely. In the first cart sat a condemned man, thirty-three years of age, who, straining and struggling in violent rage, attempted to unfasten his bound hands, and in so doing tore his shirt-sleeves in pieces, leaving his shoulders and breast uncovered. Glaring at the crowd around him, he kept calling :

" Unhappy people ! You are deceived ! Your best friends are being sacrificed ! You are lost ! Save me ! . . . I am Desmoulins ! It is I who gave you the first cockade ! "

It was indeed the hapless Camille Desmoulins, the witty editor of *Le Vieux Cordelier*, the hero of the 12th of July, 1789, who, two days before the taking of the Bastille, had addressed the Parisians in the Palais Royal, declaring his deep indignation at the dismissal of Necker, and offering to the armed citizens green ribbons and green branches as a symbol of reunion, with the cry of : " To arms ! "

He had indeed fared ill! He was on his way to the scaffold, condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal for conspiring with aristocrats, just like George Jacques Danton, the man with the lion's head, who sat next to him. Danton with Saint-Just had about a year before instituted the Revolutionary Tribunal, and it was this which now sent him to the guillotine.

True it was that with the loyal aid of his friend Camille Desmoulins and his journal *Le Vieux Cordelier*, he had been intensely hostile to the government of the Republic: the Committee of Public Safety, and the Committee of General Safety; true, indeed, he was more or less responsible for the blood of the September massacres (1792), although now of conservative opinions enough.

The mob about the carts mocked and jeered at the condemned. Camille attracted their attention by loudly shouting out his own name, but Danton replied to their insulting cries only with looks full of deepest contempt and scorn, and cried to Desmoulins:

"Be quiet, and let the rabble be!" adding, after a little while: "A year ago I instituted the Revolutionary Tribunal; I ask pardon for this of God and men . . . but I wished thus to render a repetition of the September massacres impossible!"

This last remark was not quite true; Danton had supported the murderers with all his power, and he knew quite well that this accusation would never be forgotten against him.

Danton and Camille remained silent, and did not speak to their fellow-prisoners; in the same cart with them were François Chabot, aged thirty-five years,

Claude Bazire, aged twenty-nine, Philippe François Fabre d'Eglantine, aged thirty-nine, Jean François Lacroix, aged forty, Marie Jean Hérault de Séchelles, aged thirty-four, all members of the Convention, and Jacques Delaunay, thirty-two years of age. These eight men formed the real club of the Dantonists, and had been condemned to death in consequence of their opposition to the Committee of Public Safety.

In the second cart were two Spaniards, a Dane two German Jews, and General Westermann, accused and condemned on account of fraudulent supplies to the army, and for conniving at the treason of Dumouriez. The carts had now arrived at the Place de la Révolution, which was packed with a dense crowd, the red caps of the populace waving like so many poppies in a cornfield.

The noise of the carts and the people, the confusion caused by the arrival of the procession, had aroused the utmost excitement of those already waiting in the large square.

The two narrow posts of the guillotine and the terrible knife were threatening high above the turbulent multitude, while the scaffold was surrounded by a piquet of national guards, which held the spectators back as far as the foot of an enormous monument in plaster representing Liberty, erected by the Republic opposite the pedestal which had formerly held the bronze equestrian statue of Louis XVI. When the carts arrived near the scaffold, Danton could no longer suppress his emotion, and burst into tears. "Oh, my beloved wife!" he sobbed, "I shall never see you again!"

Almost immediately, however, he collected himself, and, raising his head proudly, exclaimed, in the same loud voice which had so often resounded in the streets of Paris: "Come, come, Danton! No weakness!"

Hérault-Séchelles—the handsomest man of the Convention—was the first to die; he was accused, amongst other offences, of having joined Danton and Philippe Egalité (Duke of Orleans) in attending some aristocratic suppers, which, in the eyes of such members of the government as Robespierre and Saint-Just, were unpardonable violations of the law.

As Hérault-Séchelles rose to mount the steps of the guillotine, he approached Danton to embrace him, but the executioner, Charles Henri Sanson, intervened to prevent this. Danton flared up: "Wretch! You are thus more cruel than death itself; but you will not hinder our heads from presently meeting in the basket!"

The second to mount the awful steps was Camille Desmoulins, who held a large lock of the fair hair of his beloved wife Lucile passionately to his lips, kissing it incessantly. Danton ascended the last of all, looked down upon the exulting mob, his eyes glaring defiance and scorn, and said in a tone of command to Sanson: "You will show my head to the people; it is well worth while."[1]

And the executioner obeyed this last order. The lion's head of Danton was shown from the four sides of the scaffold to the people.

[1] Riouffe: *Mémoires d'un détenu pour servir à l'histoire de la tyrannie de Robespierre* (an III., 1795).

So died the Dantonists on April 5th, 1794, for plotting continually against the chief men of the government—Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon.

Danton had used all kinds of unfair means to defeat his political opponents, and the antagonism between this fierce, savage, and audacious leader, and the calm, composed, intelligent Robespierre, was thus decided by the knife.

The impression of his great and bold personality is still so vivid, that repeatedly fresh pleas are brought forward to show his innocence; and amongst the works important in this respect, the first place should be given to *Le Procès des Dantonnists d'après les documents par le Dr. Robinet*, 1879—a thoroughly good book.

II

APRIL 10TH, 1794

(21 GERMINAL AN II)

AS Camille Desmoulins mounted the steps of the scaffold, pressing fondly to his lips a lock of the fair hair of his beloved Lucile, he little knew the fate in store for his young wife, who was so truly and passionately devoted to him.

Enraged by his arrest, she had given vent to some rash expressions, and as soon as her husband had been taken away for his trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal, she set to work with desperate anxiety to procure his release.

The third day after the case of the Dantonists, the rumour was spread abroad of a conspiracy in the prisons, which was communicated to the Convention by the generally esteemed Saint-Just. This bosom friend of Robespierre—young, poetically inclined, with deep blue eyes and handsome features—stated that the club of Danton had been plotting in the prisons; that the wife of Desmoulins had sent money to assist in this conspiracy; that the captive General Dillon was about to leave his cell in the Luxembourg, and, at the head of these *conspirateurs*, murder both committees and liberate the prisoners. All this was believed on the evidence of

the treacherous informant Laflotte, who was himself confined in the Luxembourg, and who professed to have received his information in strict confidence from his fellow-prisoner General Dillon. At that time of passion and anxiety such an accusation was sufficient, although the existence of this conspiracy could afterwards never be fully corroborated.

The committees caused twenty-five persons to be arrested, and amongst them were: General Arthur Dillon, a friend of Danton; Chaumette, a friend of Hébert—who had already fallen by the guillotine, and who was so notorious for the ravings in his journal, *Le Père Duchène*, and so despised for his inhuman accusation against Marie Antoinette in October 1793 at the Queen's trial.

Further, the actor Grammont, who, like a true *sans-culotte*, had dared to appear on the stage with bare legs, and, like a thorough scoundrel, had shouted the vilest, most abusive language at the hapless Marie Antoinette, as the tumbril conveyed her through the rue Saint-Honoré to meet her terrible fate. In addition to these were some quite unknown men and two women—namely, the widow of Hébert, and the unfortunate Lucile, the widow of Camille Desmoulins.

Just before his death, Camille had written her a letter, which was accidentally preserved, and has been repeatedly printed. The exceedingly tender and fond love, which united these two, is well expressed in this last message.

Camille wrote from his prison: "I have seen you in my dreams, I have embraced you, and I have also embraced Maronne."

Lucile's mother—Madame Duplessis—lived at their house, and Camille was accustomed to call her jestingly "Maronne."

"And now," he continued, "I am just as far as at the time of our engagement, when every one interested me, if only he had seen you. When yesterday the citizen, who brought me your letter, returned, I asked him: 'Have you seen her?' and caught myself looking at him, as if, having been in your presence, something of you lingered about him or his clothes. He is a good man, for he took you my letter immediately. I shall see him, as it seems, twice daily, in the morning and in the evening. . . .

"My sweetest Angel! You cannot conceive how terrible it is to be in prison without knowing the reason, without being heard, without a single newspaper. How can it be possible that I am imprisoned by my colleagues, by Robespierre, who has signed the order for arrest, after all that I have done for the Republic! During five years I exposed myself, in honour of the Republic, to hatred and disdain, remained poor in the midst of the revolution,—I, who have never done harm to any one, except perhaps to you alone, my beloved Lolotte; but you have given me absolution, for you know that my poor heart is all yours. How hard it is to remain separated from you! Adieu, my Lucile, my darling Lolotte, my sweetheart: say good-bye to my father. I have married a woman, who is heavenly through her virtue. I have been a good husband, a good son, I would have been a good father. O my own Lucile, I was born to write verses, to defend the unfortunate, to

make you happy. I die, I know it well, because I have made fun of some colleagues, and because I am Danton's friend. Good-bye, my dearest, my truest friend, whom I lost when they separated us, ma Lucile, mon bon Loulou, ma poule à Cachan."

These last words are relative to an incident in their earlier life. On a walk to the village Cachan, they had seen a hen cackling pitifully in a tree, which refused to come down again because her cock had been killed.

"Oh, do not remain in the tree, do not call me with heartrending cries; think of our child, our Horace, speak to him of me, tell him how much I should have loved him. Once I shall see you again, Lucile, adieu, Loulou! Adieu! my soul, my goddess! I am at the end of my career. I still see you, Lucile! I still see her, my darling! My bound hands long to reach and touch you, and my head, when it falls, will raise its dying eyes to you. . . ."[1]

Was it a wonder then, that after this pathetic letter, poor Lucile did the utmost in her power to secure the release of her Camille? and for this crime the unfortunate young widow was imprisoned and brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

L'affaire des prisons was treated with the greatest promptitude, and of the twenty-five accused, as many as nineteen were sentenced to death "for having intended to dissolve the national assembly, to murder its members, to destroy the republican government, and to give a tyrant to the state."

[1] The full French text appears in Elie Sorin's *Histoire de la République française* (1873), pp. 615-16.

Lucile also was condemned to the guillotine, but met her death fearlessly.

Just before she was called out to die (April 10th, 1794) she wrote thus to her mother, Madame Duplessis: "Good-night, my dearest mother. A tear drops from my eyes; it is for you. I am going to sleep in peace and innocence."

The tragic death of Camille and Lucile Desmoulins is deeply impressive; Lucile's only offence was her matchless love for her husband.

From some documents concerning her[1] it appears that at the age of sixteen she was a very fascinating and beautiful girl, to whom a contemporary poet had dedicated a poem under the title "L'Abeille":

"Gentille abeille, insecte habile,
Butine en paix le long du jour;
Mais ne touche pas à Lucile,
Cette fleur n'est que pour l'amour,
Toi, dont le cœur encore sommeille,
Lucile, pense à ma chanson:
Sache qu'amour comme l'abeille
A son miel et son aiguillon."

To declare her passion for liberty, she wrote "Pastoral Stories," one of which, La Volière, has been preserved. It is the history of Cloé, a twelve-year-old shepherdess, who catches many birds, collecting whole nests in her aviary, and nursing all her little captives with the greatest love and care. But her parents do not approve of this passion, and avail themselves of her absence to allow all the birds to

[1] *Paris, en 1794 et en 1795*, Published by C. A. Dauban, 1869

escape. With deepest sorrow, the poor child opens her heart to a wise old shepherdess, who assures her that the birds are now happy, because they have been given back their liberty.

And at the conclusion Cloé says:

"Really, can they be even happier in freedom than with me?"

"Yes, Cloé."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, dear child."

"Ah well, if it is as you say, I will indeed pardon them."

From the fulness of her sweet, lovable nature, Lucile reveals her own heart as follows:

> "Ma science et mon système,
> Et mes projets et mes désirs,
> Mes plus grands faits, mes doux plaisirs,
> Tout se reduit à ce mot: J'aime!"

Lucile's gentle figure moves through the blood-red pool of misery of the Reign of Terror as the pale ghost of Francesca de Rimini through the darkness of Dante's Inferno.

III

APRIL AND MAY, 1794

(Germinal and Floreal an II)

ON the Place de la Révolution stood, day by day more threatening, the gruesome, bloody instrument of Dr. Guillotin. As member of the States-General he had, in December 1789, acquainted the assembly with his instrument as a great improvement on the supreme penalty system, adding: "With my machine I can cut off your head in the twinkling of an eye, and you will not suffer at all."

Guillotin's idea was ridiculed, and caused a great deal of hilarity, whilst popular songs were sung on the subject of his invention. In the journal of Rivarol, a strongly monarchist publication, the instrument was first called *la Mirabelle*, to ridicule Mirabeau; and later this paper—called *Actes des Apôtres*—gave it its true name, and spoke of "the unrivalled machine of Doctor Guillotin, called after him the Guillotine." In 1789 the guillotine was much sneered at in royalist circles, and amongst many others was the following song:

"C'est un coup que l'on reçoit
Avant qu'on s'en doute;
A peine on s'en aperçoit
Car on n'y voit goutte

Un certain ressort caché
Tout à coup étant lâché,
Fait sauter ter, ter;
Fait voler la tête
C'est bien plus honnête."

At the supper-parties given by the well-to-do, it was customary to set a small guillotine of mahogany on the table at dessert, and the fair guests amused themselves by placing little dolls under the knife and watching the miniature execution; the streams of red fluid which escaped were caught by the ladies on their handkerchiefs, the little doll being in reality a bottle filled with red scent.

All this mockery, however, was shortly to be changed into deadly earnest. In January 1790 the National Assembly decided that the death-sentence should only be executed by decapitation and—as the executioner Sanson, in an address to the departmental government of Paris, asserted that decapitation by the sword offered many difficulties—the Republic accepted the instrument of Dr. Guillotin in 1792, after it had been tried and improved upon previously.

In April, May, and June, 1794, the guillotine worked with horrible activity in Paris and the departments. It was the most anxious period of the Reign of Terror.

No one in the Committee of Public Safety was able to check the zeal of the Revolutionary Tribunal; not even the trio, Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon, had the least power in this respect, though their honesty and straightforwardness was never doubted.

Robespierre was living at that time in the rue Saint-

Honoré, at the house of the cabinet-maker Duplay, whose eldest daughter, Eléonore, was his affianced bride. It is related that he often asked his future father-in-law, who belonged to the jury of the Revolutionary Tribunal, which cases had been treated at court that day; to which he invariably received the same answer: "Do you look after the business of the Committee, and leave us to do our work."

Robespierre was unable to intervene personally on behalf of anybody whatsoever; the decision rested with the majority of the Committee. This committee was composed of twelve members, every one of whom was at the head of a commission, which undertook a certain part of the government as a kind of ministry.[1]

Robespierre was chairman of the commission for police and justice. Carnot had the army, Jean-Bon Saint-André the navy, and Barère foreign affairs. Besides these, the Committee included the above-mentioned friends of Robespierre, Couthon and Saint-Just; further, two scoundrels, Collot d'Herbois and Billaud-Varenne, both formerly actors; lastly, some energetic administrators, such as Robert Lindet, chief of the Département des Subsistances, and two officers of great ability, Prieur (de la Marne) and Prieur (de la Côte d'Or).

In May 1794 some most estimable persons, whom Robespierre would gladly have saved, were condemned to death: the grey-haired Malesherbes, a very honourable and capable lawyer, who, during the trial of Louis XVI., when no one else dared to come forward,

[1] For details see Heinrich von Sybel: *Geschichte der Revolutionszeit*, 1866, III Band.

and cuffs, quite regardless of not being thought sans-culottish enough in appearance. At the house of Duplay he was treated most affectionately, and consulted by every one, especially the younger members of the family. Always kind and considerate—particularly to those in trouble—polite, modest, and simple, he seemed an example of the respectable citizen: yet two months afterwards the guillotine awaited him.[1]

[1] See his portrait in Ernest Hamel's *Histoire de Robespierre* (1867), III., p. 295.

THE MOB ENTERING THE TUILERIES. [*To face p.* 19.

IV

MAY 7TH, 1794

(18 FLOREAL AN II)

THE revolution of 1789 had month by month, year by year, made important alterations in the use of the public buildings connected with the former monarchy.

The Tuileries, as the court of three kings and one regency, had been the scene of the greatest luxury and splendour, until the mob, on June 20th, 1792, forcibly entered the royal palace, and forced Louis XVI. to wear the red cap for more than an hour ; a dead silence had reigned here after the struggle of August 10th, 1792, till by a decree of the Convention in 1793 it had been turned into a government building and a place of assembly for the legislative.

Here was now the seat of the Committee of Public Safety, the Committee of General Safety, and the National Convention.

A gigantic, oblong hall between two pavilions—le Pavillon de l'Horloge and le Pavillon Marsan—had been made into the place of assembly for the sovereign legislative.

Here, from May 10th, 1793, till July 1794 a terrible struggle took place, a struggle watched by the whole

of Europe with the utmost interest and concern. Except Denmark and Switzerland, all royalist Europe was hostile to the Revolution and the Republic.

It was hoped that the murderers of Marie Antoinette and Madame Elisabeth would also destroy each other, and that one club would annihilate the other; there was general gratification when the moderate honourable Girondins, the low Hébertists, and the aristocratic Dantonists, were in succession sent to the scaffold. But it was much less appreciated, that men like Carnot and the two Prieurs proved such excellent administrators of the war department, and supplied and maintained the various armies of the Republic in so able a manner; that the generals in command, nearly everywhere victorious, were continually adding glory to the tricoloured standards.

Meanwhile, inside the hall of the Convention at the Tuileries, an important political game was being played, of which the issue was destined to decide the fate of the Republic. On May 7th, 1794, a remarkable meeting was held there, at which Robespierre by his eloquence gained a great victory.

The hall where the Convention held its sittings was formerly called Salle des Machines, and had been used by the kings for theatrical performances; but under the Republic the whole of the interior had been changed.

Between two high windows stood an enormous monument, representing Liberty; along the windows, throughout the total length of the hall, and against the two side walls, galleries had been erected for the public.

And here an uproarious crowd surged and swayed about at every morning and evening sitting, often interrupting the speakers, often drowning the voices of the legislators by their shouting.

The hall was further occupied by semicircular forms, which rose like an amphitheatre as far back as the public galleries. These forms, simply covered with green cloth, were for the use of the members, who therefore were without desks. At the middle of the wall, opposite the windows and facing the assembly, was the speakers' tribune, and behind this the president's chair.

As a decoration of this hall, a large tablet had been placed behind the speakers' tribune, with ; *Déclaration des droits de l'homme*, printed upon it in two columns ; above the president's chair and the head of the speaker, appeared from a reserved tribune three national ensigns, placed horizontally against an altar bearing the inscription "*La Loi.*"

Against the wall behind the president stood enormous statues of Greek legislators and savants : Lycurgus, Solon, Plato. From the cornice on which these statues were placed, green draperies were hanging down.

The public galleries were constructed to hold two thousand people, but often during exciting days more than three thousand crowded into them.

On the morning of May 17th, 1794, a marked attention was visible, both amongst the members, who were present in great numbers, and the crowds which occupied the public tribunes. At a former meeting it had been announced, that Robespierre would speak on the subject of : The relation between

religious and moral ideas and the principles of the Republic.

Robespierre knew that the enemies of the Republic were continually increasing in numbers, especially in consequence of certain scandalous proceedings, which had occurred on and after November 10th, 1793, when the religion of Reason had been instituted. The members of the Convention had then proceeded to Notre Dame to greet Mlle. Maillard, an actress of great beauty, as the Goddess of Reason.

This divinity was robed in a long white tunic half covered with an azure-coloured mantle, in one hand a spear, her beautiful hair flowing in long waves from under her red cap; she was surrounded by twenty young ladies in thin gossamer robes of white, "*toutes les jolies damnées de l'opéra*," as Hébert, the founder of the religion of Reason, called them.

Mademoiselle Maillard was escorted to the convention and introduced to the Assembly by the Procureur de la Commune as "one of nature's masterpieces"; she occupied a seat of honour next to the president, and was most solemnly embraced and kissed by him and the secretaries.

It was not only this foolish performance, nor the desecration of the churches, which had estranged so many hearts from the Republic, but more particularly the intolerance of the atheistic Hébertists against the priesthood and catholicism—the former religion of the state.

The closing of the churches had produced extreme exasperation in the departments; day by day the dissatisfaction at the course of events was increasing,

and Robespierre, who was fully aware of this, intended to make alterations. He himself was a good theist, without any church colouring. His remark to Elisabeth Duplay, who treated religion with great indifference, is recorded:

"You are wrong, you do not know how much consolation and hope is to be obtained from the belief in God!"[1]

When Robespierre ascended the speakers' tribune during the morning sitting of May 7th, 1794, he looked, as usual, the well-dressed citizen, in his snow-white frills and a simple neat blue coat. In a clear voice, which was distinctly audible throughout the large hall, he opened his speech by lauding the victories of the Republican armies, and then expressed his belief that the time had come to strengthen the first principles on which the durability and happiness of the Republic were based. He was astonished to find that throughout Europe such great progress had been made in science and the fine arts, while great ignorance still prevailed concerning the rudiments of public morality.

How true this remark of the orator was, appears from the writings of the celebrated historian, Henry Thomas Buckle, who, in his *History of Civilisation in England*, 1865, writes about the same theme, to show that civilisation is not only dependent upon the progress of public morality.

Robespierre argued quite differently. Civil Society —he maintained—has no other foundation than morals; politics and legislation must make morality general

[1] Ernest Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 509.

in laws; despotism rests only on immorality; the Republic has virtue as its basis.

He was therefore horrified that of late some French Republicans had fanatically attacked with intolerant persecutions the freedom of religion, and the church.

The Republic ought to act differently; every doctrine which consoled and extolled the mind and soul should be protected and held in reverence; it was an execrable dogma which denied the existence of a divinity, and preached the doctrine of annihilation after death; and he added eloquently: "If the existence of God and the immortality of the soul were but dreams, they would still be the most beautiful conceptions of the human mind."

The most perfect liberty of conscience should be allowed, the greatest tolerance should be shown, and thus only could the triumph of reason be prepared. But the authority of the priests should not be revived: "Let us leave the priests and return to the Divinity."

When the thundering applause, which greeted the orator, had ceased, Robespierre brought forward a motion of which the first article was: "The French people acknowledge the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul," and amidst renewed cheers this motion became law.

Here is a triumph which is an honour to Robespierre in the blackest period of the Reign of Terror, although it was certainly a mistake to incorporate a dogma in the first article of a law. The simple axiom: Belief is no government matter, quite sufficiently proves the foolishness of this endeavour.

But Robespierre lived in a storm, and he had not time for much reflection; moreover, it should be remembered that this new law contained the following clause in Article 9:

"The freedom of religion is maintained in conformity with the decree of 18 Frimaire."

V

JUNE 8TH, 1794

(20 PRAIRIAL AN II)

ON the seventh day of May, the National Convention had recognised by decree the existence of a Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. This new religion had to have its liturgy. Robespierre had proposed to inaugurate some moral idea, every ten days, with appropriate ceremonies, and thus to create commemorative days: To the Supreme Being, to Mankind, Liberty and Equality, Patriotism, Modesty, Friendship, Justice, Truth and some other virtues.

It was resolved, that a festival should be dedicated to the Supreme Being on June 8th, 1794.

The painter David—afterwards the flatterer of Napoleon—fraternised with Robespierre a great deal at that time, and came forward with a plan for the decoration of this festival, while Merlin de Thionville undertook to arrange the musical part of the ceremony.

All this was approved of by the Committee.

The 8th of June was a singularly beautiful day, full of warmth and sunshine, and tens of thousands had flocked to Paris to be present at the celebration of this great Republican *fête*.

Tricoloured banners waved from every window, festoons of flowers hung along the walls, young and green trees were placed in front of the houses, garlands of beautiful roses were attached to the window-sills, bunting was lavishly displayed on all the ships on the Seine; the gaily dressed citoyens and citoyennes were happy, elated, enthusiastic, and everything seemed to predict a glorious and memorable day.

On June 4th Robespierre had been elected president of the Convention, and as such was now called upon to lead the festivities.

Some details about the morning of this festival have been preserved.[1]

From the windows of the Tuileries, the beautiful gardens, with their high green foliage under which a dense multitude in holiday attire was assembled, presented an exceptionally bright and lively spectacle. Vilate, the member of the jury at the Revolutionary Tribunal, occupied some apartments close by in the Pavillon de Flore, and a little after nine o'clock he encountered Robespierre, in the costume of the members of the Convention, carrying in his hand a bouquet composed of flowers and ears of corn. All the members of the Convention wore on festive days the costume of Deputies in the field, consisting of a coat with wide lapels, a tricoloured sash, and a tricoloured *panache* (plumes) attached to the three-cornered hat, but they carried no sword; as no definite colour was prescribed for the coat, Robespierre wore a blue one with broad red *revers*. Not having

[1] See *Histoire des causes secrètes de la révolution du* 9 *et* 10 *Thermidor*, by Vilate, member of the jury at the Tribunal Révolutionnaire.

given himself time to eat anything as yet, he accepted Vilate's invitation to breakfast with him; but little honour was paid to the repast, and, seating himself before the window, he did not tire of looking out at the vast crowds of gaily dressed citoyens and citoyennes resplendent in high caps with tricoloured ribbons, many of them in brightly striped costumes of red, white, and blue. Elated and full of enthusiasm, he exclaimed, in a voice trembling with emotion: "The universe is here assembled. Oh, nature, how beautiful and sublime is thy power! Tyrants, do you not tremble at the thought of this festival?"

Shortly afterwards he appeared in the Convention, where he was greeted with loud applause. Against a wall of the Tuileries, a wooden amphitheatre had been erected temporarily, and the Convention was to hold its meeting in the open air.

As president, Robespierre addressed the public with an oration beginning with the words:

"*Français républicains*, at last this ever-blessed and happy day has arrived, which the French people consecrate to the Supreme Being. Never has the world, which He has created, presented an aspect so worthy of His greatness!" He added many phrases in the style of Rousseau, speaking of liberty and virtue having proceeded from the bosom of the Supreme Being, and tracing all evil to the egoism of tyrants who trample on their fellow-creatures. He concluded with the following:

"Countrymen! Let us surrender ourselves, under the protection of God, to transports of the purest delight; to-morr- -e shall again combat vice and

tyranny ; we shall show the world the republican virtues, and this will be still more to His honour ! "

The thousands who were assembled there applauded with frenzied excitement, forgetting that, not far away, in the Place de la Révolution, the scaffold was threatening, and that the members of the Revolutionary Tribunal were watching this excessive gaiety out of the windows of the Pavillon de Flore.

After the president's speech followed some solemn music, arranged by Merlin de Thionville.

Robespierre mounted a platform and set fire to a kind of monument—a symbolic representation of Atheism—and as soon as this disappeared in ashes, a statue representing Wisdom arose in the same spot. The enthusiasm of the crowd rose high at these symbolic theatricals, so much to the taste of the fanatical Republicans of 1794, who had so few opportunities of giving vent to similar outbursts of exultation.

Robespierre now addressed his large audience a second time, speaking about wisdom in the government of the state, and using some very fine phrases. He concluded : " Let us be generous to the good, kind towards the unfortunate, inexorable towards the wicked, and just to the whole world ! Let us crush the tyrannical league of kings by the greatness of our character, rather than by the force of our arms ! "

The masses now went in procession to the Champs de Mars, where David had had a kind of mountain constructed, crowned at the top with a tree of Liberty, and surmounted by a flag adorned with the Phrygian cap.

A choir of lady singers in white dresses, and with

wreaths of roses round their heads, were standing on the several spiral pathways which surrounded this artificial mountain; a large orchestra accompanied them in singing the beautiful hymn composed by Marie Joseph Chénier to the Supreme Being.

The Convention, led by its president Robespierre, was preceded by many deputations of clubs, and by an allegorical carriage drawn by eight oxen with gilded horns; and in this were to be seen the statue of Freedom under a tree of Liberty, and numerous emblems representing commerce, agriculture, and industry. With the sound of trumpets and the beating of drums the Convention followed this carriage, every one of the members carrying a bouquet of flowers, fruit, and ears of corn; loud applause of Robespierre resounded all along the route.

It was hoped that after this festival the extreme and bloody severity of the political trials would be tempered; and Robespierre wished as much. But however influential, however triumphant, he appeared on this day of festivity, he felt that he was powerless to thwart the Revolutionary Tribunal, or to coerce the majority of the two Committees; and he was perfectly aware of this, when, at the head of the legislative assembly, he ascended the artificial mountain to listen to the cantata.

Many of his colleagues showed their annoyance at the applause which he received from the multitude.

There were his personal enemies, remnants of the former Hébertists, such as Fouché, Bourdon de l'Oise and Courtois; there was also Tallien, who had good reasons to be extremely incensed against

the President of the Convention, and who was heard to call out loudly: "Do you see how they applaud him!" Robespierre was accused of aiming at the dictatorship; and Bourdon de l'Oise shouted: "There is but one step from the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock!" while Lecointre of Versailles, who was likewise one of his bitterest enemies, cried: "I scorn you as much as I detest you!"

Robespierre professed to be unconscious of all this, and made no reply to these shouts of insult, but calmly ascended the mountain, where rows on rows of vocalists were singing the opening lines of the hymn to the Supreme Being:

"Ton temple est sur le monts, dans les airs, sur les ondes,
Tu n'as point de passé, tu n'as point d'avenir,
Et sans les occuper tu remplis tous les mondes,
Qui ne peuvent te contenir!"

From thousands of throats a loud burst of harmonious rejoicing arose to the glory of the Supreme Being, whom Robespierre had reinstated in honour.

The sun shone brilliantly from a clear blue sky, the people were intensely elated; but the leader of the festivities, the recipient of so much loud and enthusiastic applause, appeared grave and subdued at the evening meal of the Duplays, and, whilst gently pressing the hand of his Eléonore, he said, with a strange tremor in his voice: "You will not see me much longer."

History is indebted to her sister, Madame le Bas, for the preservation of these words.

VI

THE OCCULT MYSTICISM OF 1794

ON June 15th, 1794, Robespierre gave his enemies an opportunity to formulate a third complaint against him.

The number of his antagonists increased; the execution of the Dantonists and the festival to the Supreme Being were serious transgressions in the eyes of his enemies; and another offence was added on the date just mentioned.

Something very strange had occurred.

In a distant back street of Paris a plot of a curious nature had been discovered. A company of eccentrics were in the habit of holding secret meetings, at which they indulged in the raptures of a childish mysticism. Similar gatherings were not uncommon in 1794, and it is well known that at the end of the eighteenth century numbers of these secret societies existed in Germany and France, which, with the aid of science, were enabled to explain the mysteries of life and death! In Germany especially, these "illuminati," as they were called, had united under the title of "Rosicrucians," and in Berlin, about the year 1777, they maintained that they practised neither black magic (Satanism, Dæmonology), nor white magic (spiritualism,

astrology, and ghost apparitions), but the divine magic, through which they placed themselves in communication with the Creator of the Universe.

During the latter years of the reign of Louis XVI., crafty impostors, such as Saint-Germain, Cagliostro and Cazotte, who had really made themselves believe in their power to guide the forces of nature, had been universally idolised. In imitation of Swedenborg's doctrine about the "New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse," secret societies were formed in France—"Théosophes illuminés," which did not leave one of Nature's riddles unexplained.

On June 15th, 1794, Vadier—a member of the Committee of General Safety—brought a report before the Convention, relating to a newly-formed society of fanatics.

It had been discovered, namely, that Cathérine Théot—an old woman whom the members of the Convention jestingly called *Théos* (divinity)—held meetings at her dwelling, at which strange rites were performed. Those who wished to enter the circle had to submit to these ceremonies: to kneel before Cathérine Théot—"Mother of God," as she was called by her disciples—embrace her seven times, and renounce all worldly pleasures. The same fanatics had been prosecuted in 1779, under Louis XVI., when Cathérine had been imprisoned in the Bastille for a short time. The number of members was not large, and comprised a former Carthusian monk, Dom Gerle, who had taken a seat in the Assembly of the States-General in 1789, a doctor, formerly in the service of the Duke of Orleans (Philippe Egalité), a certain

Quesvremont, called Lamotte, a widow named Godefroy, and the Marchioness de Chastennois. These unfortunates had been arrested on the report of a spy of the Committee, who had been present at their meeting, and who, on expressing his desire for salvation, had been accepted as a member of this society.

It is not impossible that the personal enemies of Robespierre made use of this incident to try and wither the laurels he had gained but a short while before at the great festival to the Supreme Being. It was asserted that the aged Cathérine Théot had written a letter to Robespierre, in which she addressed him as: the Son of the Supreme Being, the Eternal Word, the Redeemer of Mankind, the Messiah foretold by the prophets. This letter is very probably a pure invention of Robespierre's enemies, as the eccentric old woman —"the Mother of God"—could not as much as write her own name.[1]

Nevertheless, derogatory rumours were soon spread abroad, and the more willingly so as the ex-Carthusian monk, Dom Gerle, was in possession of a certificate from Robespierre—*un certificat de civisme*—given by him out of kindness to a former co-deputy.

Robespierre was still president of the Convention when Vadier reported about this affair, while trying to treat the matter in a humorous way, calling the old Cathérine expressly, "Théos,"—which amused the members not a little. Although Robespierre's name was not mentioned, it was distinctly felt, by some of those present, that an attack was being prepared on

[1] Vilate, *Mystères de la Mère de Dieu dévoilés*; quoted by Ernest Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 590.

their president; and at the conclusion of Vadier's report it was proposed, and accepted by the Convention, to commit Cathérine Théot, Dom Gerle, the widow Godefroy, and the Marchioness de Chastennois for trial at the Revolutionary Tribunal.

At the meeting of the Committee of Public Safety, Robespierre vigorously opposed the execution of so ridiculous a resolution. As opponents there he had especially such arch-intriguers as Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois; but he succeeded in convincing his colleagues that it was absurd to bring these "illuminati" before the tribunal—mere fanatics, who had never occupied themselves with politics.

Robespierre sent for Fouquier-Tinville—the public prosecutor at the Revolutionary Tribunal—and ordered him to put a stop to the prosecution.

Notwithstanding the opposition of Fouquier-Tinville and of the Committee of General Safety, Robespierre was once more victorious, and the lives of the foolish fanatics were spared.

* * * * * *

The history of the "Mother of God" has at this moment—after the lapse of a century—a peculiar significance. The highest circles in Parisian society are again interesting themselves in Cathérine Théot; it has become fashionable to cultivate the so-called occult powers.

A little while ago, in a novel of Frits Lapidoth, which appeared under the title *Goétia*, some very important information was given about the latest French fashion in occultism.

In general, there is a certain inclination with some

writers—for example, J. K. Huysmans, Count de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Edouard Rod, René de Gourmond, Alfred Valette, and Gilbert Augustin Thierry—to make an impression with their "Récits de l'Occulte." However strange this may seem to us of to-day, it is only a revival of antiquated beliefs, which now, with the renaissance of long-forgotten interest in magic, thaumaturgy, and theosophy, are being unearthed from the obscure past. In France, during the last twenty years, there has been a marked development of interest in mysteries and mystics which has shown itself in various ways.

Fashionable circles, and some authors especially, are attempting to distinguish themselves by reinstating magic, thaumaturgy, astrology, and occultism in their former place of honour.

A learned German book appeared in 1890—*Handbuch der Geheim-Wissenschaften*—by Dr. Carl du Prel. This author maintained, on scientific grounds, that a number of spirits were hovering in the earth's atmosphere, and that these could only be observed by believers.

Dr. du Prel's theory was: without faith, no science; while common-sense tells us: without science, no faith.

If information is required as to what took place in Parisian society some while ago, where the name of Cathérine Théot was again heard, it can be obtained from the work entitled *Suggestion* (1891) by Henri Nizet, an already forgotten book, which describes modern Parisian society, where debates are held over the theosophic significance of numerals, over the

tetragram, over the triads, over the ogdoads of Basilides, over the abracadabra, over the algorithm, over the scale of Eratosthenes, over the fifty gates of science, over the trident of Paracelsus, over the Cabala, over the Gnosis, etc.

Does not all this raking up of perfectly antiquated absurdities give the impression that a new gospel is being eagerly sought for—and the old one resolutely put aside; that in the craze and anxiety for novelties, the same is done as by the "magasins des modes" and the "tailleurs pour dames" who, in settling the fashions for the coming season, combine costumes from the days of Henri III. and Henri IV. with the most extravagant dresses of the Directoire?

Mundus vult decipi . . . .

VII

CHERCHEZ LA FEMME

AMONGST the numerous enemies of Robespierre, no one was more bitter against him than Tallien, and the important events of the end of July 1794 are largely due to the machinations of Tallien, who detested Robespierre heartily.

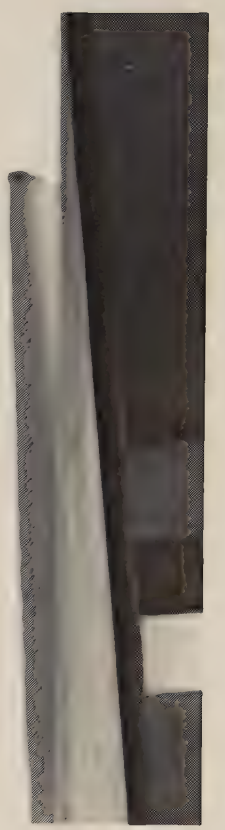
The latter had signed an order for the arrest of a beautiful woman, who was now languishing in prison and in all probability shortly to perish by the guillotine; and this lady was deeply and passionately beloved by Tallien, Robespierre's bitterest enemy. Clearly she must be saved at any cost; and with this aim her protector plotted his enemy's ruin, which would enable him to liberate his beloved, the noted Thérézia Cabarrus, the wife of the Marquis de Fontenay.

In every respect Thérézia was a most remarkable woman.

By order of the Committee of Public Safety, she had been arrested at Versailles, on the night of the 30th-31st of May 1794,[1] by the generals la Vallette and Boulanger. She had been confined in the prison

[1] *Rapport du général Boulanger sur l'arrestation de la citoyenne Cabarrus. Papiers inédits.* Tome I., p. 271.

THÉRÉZIA CABARRUS. [*To face p.* 93.



la Petite-Force, where the following description was entered in the register :—

" Thérézia Cabarrus ; wife of Fontenay.
" Age 20 years ; native of Madrid in Spain.
" Without occupation ; residing at Versailles.
" Height : 4 feet 11 inches. Hair : brown.
" Eyebrows : ditto. Forehead : ordinary.
" Eyes : brown. Nose : ordinary.
" Mouth : small. Chin : round."

To "give colour" to this official prison portrait, a few poetical words of Lamartine (*Histoire des Girondins*) would not be out of place.

Thérézia appears, according to this poet, as " le feu du Midi," " la langueur du Nord," " la grâce de France."

Many historians have attempted to give a picture of Thérézia Cabarrus, and all agree that she was a very fascinating woman, whose exceptional beauty was tenfold enhanced by her irresistible charm of manner.

Her bewitching smile, her sparkling eyes, with their long silken lashes, gave her to no small degree " le charmant art de plaire." She seemed to have studied the most superb statues of antiquity ; her head-dress, her carriage, her walk, were Greek, and exactly copied from Praxiteles. She was a modern Aspasia, without, however, the intellect, dignity and nobility of the beautiful Athenian. She had but one object in life : pleasure ; only one religion : the worship of her person.

During the Directoire she was seen on one occasion in the Jardin de Tuileries in Paris with breast, arms and knees completely bare ; a crowd of people quickly

assembled round her, and, indignant at her appearance, would have ill-treated her, just as the fishwives had once molested Théroigne de Méricourt,[1] but for the timely appearance of a deputy from the Council of Five Hundred, who was passing in his carriage and saved her from the mob.

How, then, had Tallien—who was in no way to be compared with Pericles—discovered this modern Aspasia?

Thérézia was the child of a Spanish banker, who, in recognition of his financial services, had obtained the title of count in Madrid. The Count of Cabarrus had given his beautiful daughter an excellent education, and she consequently spoke Spanish, French and Italian with the greatest ease and fluency. In 1788, he sent her to Paris to complete her studies, where she lived at the house of Madame de Boisgeloup, whose husband had been councillor to the King.

The Count himself came to reside in Paris in 1789, and learnt that a wealthy marquis—Conseiller au Parlement de Paris—had proposed marriage to his daughter Thérézia, who had then reached the age of sixteen. This distinguished nobleman, a kind of eloquent Don Juan, had succeeded in persuading Thérézia to become his wife, possibly in view of the title: Marquise de Fontenay.

The important events of 1789, 1790, 1791 and 1792, were followed by the young marquise without much anxiety, as she considered herself safe in the castle of her husband.

[1] *Les femmes célèbres de* 1789 *à* 1795 *et de leur influence dans la révolution, par C. Lairtullier.* Tome II., p. 256.

During this period Tallien had gradually become a man of great importance. He was born in 1769, and was a natural son,—probably of a certain Marquis de Bercy ; at first his education was well provided for, but on his running away from school in his fifteenth year, he was left to his own devices. He studied law for a short time, was afterwards compositor at a large printing firm, and later secretary to Alexandre de Lameth, a member of the Assembly of the States-General. In 1789, after the first important events of the Revolution, when he was a youth of twenty, he had the inspiration to start a newspaper and call it : *Le Journal des Sans-Culottes*, a name which he afterwards changed into : *L'Ami des Citoyens*.

Being a remarkably handsome and very gallant man, there seems to have been some ground for the remark, made by his friends at the time when the title was changed, who stated that he should have chosen *L'Ami des Citoyennes* instead.

After August 10th, 1792, Tallien became a member of the municipal council of Paris. He defended the ghastly murders in the Parisian prisons on September 2nd, 1792, and openly declared that he considered the work of the Septembriseurs a patriotic action.

He was a member of the Legislative Assembly for Versailles, afterwards of the Convention, and became formidable as an orator and leader of debates. After the introduction of the Reign of Terror, he was sent to Bordeaux as commissioner of the Convention, to preach also in this city of the Girondins the gospel of the Terreur, and arrived there in September 1793, with some colleagues, as ambassadors from Paris.

In Bordeaux the prevailing feeling was quite different from that existing in Paris at the time; it was crowded with fugitive priests, *émigrés* and nobles; but as soon as Tallien displayed his power, disarmed the citizens, and erected the guillotine, everything was changed.

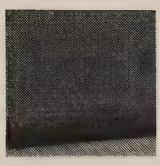
At that time, Thérézia Cabarrus, Marquise de Fontenay, chanced to be passing through Bordeaux with the old Marquis, her husband; after the execution of their friends the Girondins, their stay in France had become very dangerous, and they intended to make their escape to Spain.

This young and beautiful Marquise and her aged spouse were not on the best of terms with one another, and were negotiating for a divorce; but the common danger had obliged them to flee together to Bordeaux. However, since the arrival of the members of the Convention, with their absolute authority, since the institution of the Revolutionary Tribunal and the erection of the guillotine in the large square, Bordeaux had become as unsafe as the capital.

And now a tragic incident took place.

The Marquis and Marquise de Fontenay were staying with a member of their family whilst preparing to obtain the divorce. They did not dare to show themselves often in public, while Tallien and his colleague Ysabeau were ruling with such tyranny and bloodshed.

Thérézia learned that an English ship was ready to leave the roadsteads of Bordeaux with three hundred French fugitives, and that the captain would not weigh anchor until he received the balance of passage-money for the emigrants, which was something short of three thousand francs; she requested the captain to come



hore, and paid him the balance, in exchange for list of the names of the fugitives.

The news of this transaction soon spread like wildfire rough Bordeaux.

The terrorists first assaulted the captain; but he fended himself ably, and contrived to make his escape. Madame de Fontenay was then sought for and found alking with some friends in the Place du Théâtre. ıe was immediately surrounded by a mob, who greeted :r with shouts of: "There she is, she who has scued the aristocrats!" and some of them attempted) lay hands on her, knowing that the list of the names the fugitives was hidden in her dress. The poor oman pointed in vain to her tricoloured cockade, ıt hardly succeeded in freeing herself from a savage, ho was almost successful in snatching away the list, hen suddenly Tallien, who lived in a house at the lace du Théâtre, arrived on the scene; his loud voice on made itself heard: "I know that woman! If ıe is guilty the law will deal with her. But you are o generous to strike a defenceless enemy, especially hen that enemy is a woman."

VIII

NOTRE DAME DE THERMIDOR

THE mob withdrew willingly on Tallien's interference; for did they not know him as the all-powerful ruler at Bordeaux, the leader of the Revolutionary Tribunal, the master of the guillotine? The president of the Tribunal, Lacombe, had already been informed of the escape of the aristocrats, and caused Madame de Fontenay to be arrested immediately. But Tallien—called not in vain *l'ami des citoyennes*—had been greatly struck by the charms of Thérézia; he proceeded to the new abode of the fair marquise, and ordered the gaoler to bring her before him for preliminary examination in the clerk of court's room.

The sunshine which the beautiful prisoner brought with her into this sombre room, her pale, lovely face, her sad, beseeching looks, her lustrous brown eyes, her splendid black hair waving round her queenly neck, were too much for the youthful and handsome judge. The presence of the turnkey obliged him to assume a severe tone when inquiring into the cause of her stay at Bordeaux and her intention to emigrate. Thérézia explained that she was only passing through the town in company with her husband, on a visit to

her relatives in Madrid. All this would be examined by the Tribunal, maintained Tallien. His fair prisoner, still more terrified, looked pitifully at her judge : the Tribunal meant death ; was she not the daughter of a count, the wife of a marquis? Tallien was unable to withstand the magical eyes any longer, and ordered the gaoler to fetch his aide-de-camp.

The conversation which then followed has not become known, but it is easy to guess, considering all that happened after this interview.

The *ci-devant* marquise begged her life and that of her husband, whom she desired to divorce ; her prayer fell on sympathetic ears.

Tallien knew that he ran great risks in liberating her, but doubtless considered the possession of this beautiful young aristocrat a sufficient quid pro quo ; she was dismissed from prison, and her husband was given an opportunity to escape to Spain.

Thérézia remained in Bordeaux, prepared to show her zeal for the Revolution. She moderated the terrorist diligence of Tallien, and moved him to show mercy. But this mercy was made remunerative ; the rich had to buy their lives at high prices.

Sénar, a spy of the Committee of Public Safety, who afterwards published Memoirs, asserted that Thérézia Cabarrus had instituted a *bureau de grâces* which brought in a vast amount of money. Whatever truth there may have been in this, it is a well-known fact that she accepted large gifts from wealthy families after having rendered them important services, thanks to her remarkable influence over Tallien.

Amongst other favours, she obtained from him a

saltpetre concession, at that time a very rich source of income.[1]

Closely united by a savage passion, these two lived for the time in great luxury, and Tallien's colleague, Ysabeau, not less than his friend, was attracted by the beautiful Thérézia, and shared their luxurious, elegant mode of living, likewise keeping horses and carriages. They had their own box at the theatre, occupied seats of honour at all public entertainments, and gave brilliant banquets, at which the choicest and oldest wines of Bordeaux were drunk.

According to Sénar's Memoirs, Tallien drove in an open coach with his beautiful companion through Bordeaux, the citoyenne Cabarrus dressed as Pallas, with a red cap, from which her long and glossy black hair fell like a mantle round her shoulders, in one hand a spear, the other resting on Tallien's shoulder. In later years Madame Tallien, as she was then called, often appeared in antique costume before the guests of her supposed husband, her bosom and arms uncovered, her bare feet in golden sandals.

While in Bordeaux she lived and reigned as a queen. The Marquis de Paroy has amply described in his Memoirs—afterwards largely quoted by Capefigue in his *Déesses de la Liberté*—how Thérézia lived in this city.

The Marquis de Paroy was a painter, and at that time deeply concerned about the fate of his father, a supporter of the Girondins, who had been arrested and imprisoned in la Réole.

[1] *Rapport de Boulanger, sur l'arrestation de la citoyenne Cabarrus. Papiers inédits.* Tome I., p. 269.

He sent an illuminated petition to Thérézia, representing *l'amour sans culotte*, holding in one hand a spear and a red cap, in the other a heart with the words:

"Quand l'amour en bonnet se trouve sans culotte,
La liberté lui plaît, il en fait sa marotte."

In this petition he requested Madame de Fontenay to allow Eros sans-culotte to plead for an unhappy son, who was anxious about his imprisoned father. He was invited to an audience with Thérézia, and found there a great many people with petitions. The citoyenne Cabarrus begged the citoyen to follow her into her study, and de Paroy then described the abode:

"It was the bower of the Muses. I saw there an open piano; music on the desk; a guitar on the sofa; a harp in the corner; a small painting on an easel; a box with oil paints and brushes on a stool; a table covered with drawings, amongst which was a newly-commenced aquarelle; an ivory palette and some small brushes; an open writing-desk full of papers, petitions, and memoirs; a small library, untidy and disorderly through much handling; lastly a frame for embroidery, on which some white satin cloth was spanned."

Thérézia introduced citizen Paroy to Tallien, who advised him to consult Lacombe, the president of the Tribunal.

It was only after the departure of Tallien from Bordeaux that the Marquis succeeded in obtaining pardon for his father.

In order to cure her lover of his revolutionary zeal, Thérézia pretended to languish for his portrait, and

had a great deal of his time occupied by sittings for a celebrated painter, who had been entrusted with the task. By keeping him company at these sittings, she always succeeded in prolonging them very adroitly, trying to make the dreaded pro-consul forget why he had come to Bordeaux.

It is very certain that her influence was beneficial to Bordeaux, and numerous lives were spared; she had suffered such terror herself during her short term of imprisonment that she did her best to save as many accused persons as was in her power. She professed to have been bitten by rats in her cell at night; and afterwards, when she appeared in Greek costume in her drawing-rooms, she often said to her admirers, who bowed low enough to touch the ground: "If you look carefully, you will be able to see the teeth of the rats of Bordeaux."

While Tallien and Thérézia were thus ruling in Bordeaux, some spies, and even the governor of the prison, wrote letters to the Committee in Paris, and, by a decision of this Committee, Robespierre ordered Tallien to return to the capital. The unexpected summons caused him to tremble for himself and his lady-love, and as soon as he appeared in the Convention, he complained of having been libelled; this was at first believed, and he was left in peace.

To protect his adored against all suspicion, he made her send a petition from Bordeaux—drawn up by himself—to the National Convention, in which she proposed that all young girls should spend some time before their marriage "in the homes for the poor and afflicted, to relieve the sufferers." She

desired to be one of the first "to devote herself to this glorious work."

The citoyenne Cabarrus was honourably mentioned by the Convention, and the proposal was referred to the Committee of Public Safety. Fine words did not avail here, however; and it was decided by Carnot, Robespierre, Billaud, and Barère to send a special agent, Jullien, to Bordeaux, to make closer inquiries. The reports of Jullien exactly informed the Committee of all that had happened; Thérézia, warned by Ysabeau, scented danger, fled to Fontenay-aux-Roses, and hid herself in a villa belonging to the Marquis. Here she was frequently visited by Tallien, and even ventured to come to Paris, where she dined with him at the restaurant Méot. But an order for her arrest was issued, and she succeeded in concealing herself for a short while in Versailles, where she was at last discovered and arrested during the night of the 30th to the 31st of May. She remained in prison till 10 Thermidor, the day of Robespierre's death, and received from her many admirers the name of: "Notre Dame de Thermidor."

IX

IN THE PRISON OF THE TERREUR

THE order for the arrest of Thérézia Cabarrus had been signed by four members of the Committee of Public Safety : Robespierre, Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, and Barère.

It ordered that "the said Cabarrus, daughter of a Spanish banker, wife of the said Fontenay, ex-councillor at the Parlement de Paris, be immediately arrested, placed in solitary confinement, and that all her papers be sealed." She was conducted by General Boulanger to the prison la Force, but had hardly entered her cell when a spy of the Committee came to offer her liberty in exchange for her written declaration that Tallien had behaved in Bordeaux as "*un mauvais citoyen.*" Thérézia refused, saying: "I am only twenty years old, but I would much rather die twenty times over."

Tallien, however, did not deserve such heroic devotion ; he behaved like a coward, trembled before Robespierre, and, whether from fear or cunning, wrote letters in which he denied all connection with her.

When Thérézia was arrested in Versailles, she was found in the company of Jean Guéry, her manager of the saltpetre business, who had conducted her on the journey from Bordeaux to Fontenay-aux-Roses.

Tallien himself signed an order for his arrest and confinement in the Luxembourg or any other prison, indicating him as the young man who accompanied the said Thérézia Cabarrus, femme Fontenay. This order was dated 12 Prairial an II. (May 31st, 1794), the same day therefore, that the "aforesaid Cabarrus" was taken to la Force. Jean Guéry wrote from his prison in the Section du Mont Blanc to Tallien—to whom he was known—entreating him to intervene on his behalf.

On receipt of this letter, Tallien wrote at once to the Revolutionary Committee of this section, and stated that a citizen—unknown to him—had written from his prison to the effect that he had been arrested with a citoyenne:

"I only interest myself for those whom I know well, and I am so little acquainted with this individual, that I was even unaware of his name. As to the woman arrested with him, I have known her in Bordeaux, where I was sent in my capacity of representative of the people, but I have been back in Paris for the last four months, and I do not know what may have happened during that period; besides, I do not desire to be mixed up with it in any way." He ended: "I beg you therefore—brethren and friends—to receive my formal declaration that I take no interest whatever in these persons, and to acknowledge the receipt of my letter.

"Salut et fraternité,

"TALLIEN." [1]

[1] This letter was first published by C. A. Dauban (1869) in his *Paris en 1794 et en 1795, Histoire de la rue, du club, de la famine*, pp. 402–3.

From his signing the order for Jean Guéry's arrest, and from his letter to the Revolutionary Committee of the section, Tallien betrayed great fear for his life. He had lavished favours on the imprisoned Thérézia, and every one knew it; Robespierre might possibly persuade the Committee at any moment to have him arrested; and that meant death.

He therefore took care to appear as staunch a terrorist as possible, and for that reason he supported the arrest of Guéry—Thérézia's business manager—possibly his rival. He declined to listen to Guéry's request for assistance, and ignored Thérézia in his letter just quoted, and apparently took no further interest in her.

This was not all pure selfishness, but deep deliberation and possibly a little jealousy. Whilst thus posing as a red-hot Jacobin, a staunch friend of Robespierre, he treacherously took the ground from underneath his feet, and secretly worked for his enemy's fall.

He was anxious therefore to appear quite indifferent to "the aforesaid Cabarrus," and requested the brothers and friends of the Revolutionary Committee not to forget to confirm the receipt of his letter.

Through the exertions of Danton and Hébert, revolutionary committees had been instituted in the forty-eight sections of Paris, which in no small way played the part of the two great committees, and had sent many citizens to prison by their accusations.

Meanwhile Thérézia, languishing in captivity, was examined by Coffinhall, a judge of the Revolutionary Tribunal. The poor woman understood that her death-bells would soon be ringing; but her doom was

to be delayed as yet. She had been arrested by the generals Boulanger and la Valette, and the latter—a *ci-devant* marquis—had interested himself for her, and induced Coffinhall to postpone her trial.

Without doubt her sojourn in la Force was a veritable torture. She was placed in a dark dungeon, full of dirt and cobwebs, with a bundle of damp straw to rest upon; the only sound that reached her ears was the savage barking of the large watch-dogs, which were often needed to prevent the escape of prisoners. In the order for her arrest it was stated that she should be kept "*au secret*," hence the reason why the unfortunate woman was confined in so terrible a cell. She was only now and then allowed, at the fall of night, to take some fresh air in the yard, and a little later was removed to a somewhat better cell, where she had at least dry straw.

A friend of Thérézia—the Marquise du Hallay—has related some details about her prison life, which seem somewhat extraordinary, but may be true.

When the citoyenne Cabarrus was thus walking in the prison-yard for the first time, a stone fell at her feet. She picked it up and found that a strip of paper was wrapped round it, on which was some writing. As it was too dark to read this at the time, she could not satisfy her curiosity until the following morning, when she detected in the disguised characters the handwriting of Tallien. This was the message: "I am watching over you; every evening at nine o'clock you will be allowed in the yard; I shall be near you."

The gaoler had told her that she would be allowed

to have her meal that day with some other citoyennes, but the presence of the warders prevented the women from exchanging many words.

The day was spent in the greatest suspense. In the evening another message was conveyed to her by a stone, and so on, every night for a full week, after which her walks in the yard were disallowed.

Tallien's mother, under an assumed name, had somehow succeeded in winning the gaoler for her son's interests. She had assured him that the citoyenne Cabarrus was suffering from heart disease, and would inevitably perish in her cell unless some fresh air were allowed her. But the spies of the Committee soon discovered all this, and Thérézia was removed to the prison Les Carmes.

Here she was placed with two other prisoners: Josephine de Beauharnais and the Duchesse d'Aiguillon. The walls of their common cell could prove this, as for a very long time afterwards these names were still to be read:

Citoyenne Tallien,
Josephine Beauharnais,
d'Aiguillon.

Josephine Tacher was the widow of General Beauharnais, who was guillotined on account of his defeat at the Rhine. This lovely prisoner, who rivalled Thérézia in beauty, was destined to become Empress of France.

Madame d'Aiguillon was the last of a very distinguished family, whose members had nearly all perished on the scaffold. The three captives were

allowed to pass their time with sewing and reading, and could talk to each other without witnesses. The very tender friendship which grew up between them cheered their hearts somewhat amidst the agonies of their daily life; and it was probably due to her conversations with these unfortunate women that Thérézia resolved to make one more effort for liberty.

How it was done has not been explained, but a dagger was sent by her to Tallien on July 22nd, (4 Thermidor); he recognised the Spanish poniard of his Thérézia, and understood that thus she was commanding him to liberate her or die in the attempt. And this dagger had, indeed, no small influence on the important events of 8 and 9 Thermidor.

X

THE YOUTH OF ROBESPIERRE

THE plot against Robespierre, by Tallien, Fouché, Collot, and Billaud-Varenne, thickened and matured during the last week of July 1794. Fouché had known Robespierre long before the Revolution. As Robespierre has only to live now another five days, we will pause here to throw a glance at his past. In the baptismal register of the église de la Madeline at Atrecht in Artois, the following entry may still be read :

On the sixth of May in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight, has been baptised by me the undersigned Maximilien-Marie-Isidore, born on the same day at two o'clock in the morning of the legitimate marriage of M. Maximilien Barthelémy François de Robespierre, advocate to the court of Artois, and dame Jacqueline Carrault. The godfather was M. Max de Robespierre, paternal grandfather, advocate to the court of Artois, and the godmother (dame) Marie Marguerite Cornu, wife of Jacques François Carrault, maternal grandmother, who have signed as under.

DEROBESPIERRE. J. LANGLAIT,
MARIE MARGUERITE CORNU. *Curé.*

It appears, therefore, that Robespierre was born on May 6th, 1758.[1] Atrecht, in the département Pas de Calais, was at that time a prosperous town situated in the midst of a flourishing agricultural district. A tradition exists that the family of Robespierre had emigrated from Ireland after the battle of the Boyne, and that their name was formerly Robertspeare. The Robespierres belonged to the respectable but not well-to-do families of Atrecht. Grandfather, father, and son, were members of the bar. Maximilien was the eldest of four children, one of whom died in infancy. Robespierre's sister Charlotte survived him forty years, and wrote *Mémoires de Charlotte Robespierre*, published after her death by Laponnerary. A good deal is said in these about the youth of Maximilien. His brother Augustin, who was five years younger, followed him to Paris, and shared his death on 9 Thermidor. When he was seven years old he lost his mother, and shortly afterwards his father. Charlotte stated in her Memoirs (p. 43): "This fatal event has had more influence than one would think on the character of Maximilien; it rendered him sad and melancholy." At the death of their mother, the three children were taken charge of by their maternal relatives. When he was a boy of eight, Maxmilien was sent to the college of Atrecht; his sister related that he was of a serious disposition, and very seldom took part in the games of his schoolfellows, but showed an extraordinary zeal for his studies. His favourite pastime was to collect prints and engravings, which he allowed

[1] In Brockhaus' *Conversations Lexicon*, the year 1759 is erroneously stated.

her to admire on Sundays. Some one had made him a present of some pigeons, and he grew so fond of these *oiseaux de l'amour* that he seemed heartbroken when one of them died through his sister's carelessness. Thanks to the generosity of a friend of the family, Monseigneur de Conzié, Bishop of Atrecht, he received a bursarship, and this enabled him to study for several years at the College Louis-le-Grand in Paris. Among his schoolfellows were Fréron, afterwards contributor to *L'Orateur du Peuple*, and Camille Desmoulins, the future editor of *Le Vieux Cordelier*. He distinguished himself at this college by his great diligence, and the progress which he made in his studies. The Bishop of Atrecht showed his satisfaction with Maximilien by securing a bursarship for his brother Augustin, who was thereupon promoted to the Ecole de Droit.

Charlotte stated that her brother had no other ambition than to become an advocate like his father and grandfather—no other ideal than "to defend the oppressed against the oppressors, to plead the cause of the weak against the strong, who deceives and crushes him."

A document still exists which describes how well Robespierre conducted himself at the College Louis-le-Grand.[1] It states that a sum of six hundred livres had been unanimously granted to him by the council, upon the principal's report of Robespierre's great abilities and exemplary conduct during his twelve years' sojourn at the college ; and on his leaving they

[1] *Recueil de toutes les déliberations importantes prises depuis* 1763 *par le bureau d'administration du collège Louis-le-Grand et des colléges réunis, Paris* 1781.

ROBESPIERRE AS A YOUNG MAN. [*To face p.* 39.

also testified that he studied with excellent success, repeatedly won prizes, passed all his examinations, and had particularly made great progress in law and philosophy. Later it became evident that he had made a careful study of Rousseau's works. According to his sister he remarked, in an essay on this celebrated author: "Divine master, you have taught me to know myself while quite young, you have made me appreciate the dignity of my own nature, and reflect on the great principles of social order."

It was said that in 1778—the year of Rousseau's death—Robespierre visited the author of *Le Contrat Social*, at Ermenonville.

In 1781 he returned to Atrecht at the age of twenty-three, with the degree of advocat au Parlement de Paris. He was well received and admitted to the bar of the provincial court of Artois.

Charlotte stated that after winning some important cases he succeeded in obtaining a busy practice; and, in 1783, defended eloquently and successfully a notable lawsuit.

One of the inhabitants of St. Omer, M. Vissery de Bois-Valé, had a lightning-conductor placed on his house. This gentleman—a great lover of natural sciences—had been ambassador to the newly-born republic of the United States, and on his return to Paris had imported the invention of Benjamin Franklin.

The great-grandfathers of those for whose benefit the British parliament recently inserted a special clause in the new Vaccination Act, had at that time a conscientious objection to the useful invention of

the great American.[1] Many citizens of St. Omer complained about Vissery de Bois-Valé, especially his immediate neighbours, who were afraid of being doubly exposed now to the dangers from lightning.

The supporter of Franklin's invention was called before the Echevins, and was ordered to remove the lightning-conductor at once; hereupon he instructed Robespierre to appeal at Arras against this verdict. In his plea, the young lawyer ridiculed the good citizens of St. Omer, showed how very useful these paratonnerres had already proved on public buildings and powder-magazines, and called attention to the fact that King Louis XVI. himself had had a conductor placed on one of his castles. The end of his speech was characteristic. If there still remained any doubt as to the effect of these instruments, no one would have dared to experiment on so dear and sacred a head. "This proof is undeniable, and I call to witness the sentiments of the whole of France for a prince who is her pride and her glory."[2]

To those who are surprised at such words from Robespierre, it should be explained that, in 1783, very little was heard about the coming Revolution, and, for the support of his case, this lawyer's style of argument was perhaps necessary. He succeeded in gaining his object, in winning the case for his distinguished client, and his reputation as a lawyer increased day by day.

[1] *Translator.*

[2] *Deux playdoyers pour le sieur Vissery de Bois-valé. Arras, De l'imprimerie de Guy Delasablonniere*, 1788; quoted by T. Hermann, *Leben Robespierre's I Theil* (1788—1789), *Oster-programm des Köllnischen Gymnasiums zu Berlin* 1871.

In 1784 he won another noteworthy victory. A monk accused a poor girl, Clémentine Duteuf, of having stolen a bag containing two thousand louis d'or from the convent Saint-Sauveur, near Atrecht. Robespierre proved that this charge was entirely a fabrication of the monk, who wished to revenge himself on the poor girl, for resisting his base and dishonourable intentions.

His sister stated that he would never accept a case which was unworthy of defence.

When lawyer at Atrecht, he showed a great interest in literature and the fine arts. There existed in this place, as everywhere else in France, a literary society named "La Société des Rosatis," which met in a rose garden on the Scarpe, the river which runs through Atrecht. In the midst of idyllic nature, with roses in their coats, the poets assembled here and read their verses to one another.

Nobody then prophesied the coming storm. The great Carnot had been admitted to this society in 1780, Robespierre in 1782; both entirely unconscious that their names would soon resound through the whole civilized world, that they would go down to posterity as the most notable men of the eighteenth century; unconscious of the great part which would be played by them in one of the most important periods in the world's history.

XI

THE LAWYER ROBESPIERRE

DURING the summer months subsequent to 1782, Robespierre appeared with a rose in his button-hole in the beautiful garden on the Scarpe; and here, in the midst of a lively circle of friends and fellow-students of the fine arts, he spent many a happy moment.

To the same society belonged a man to whose great abilities the French Republic would one day owe her brilliant victories over all Europe; the great future administrator of the war department; the energetic member of the Committee of Public Safety: the famous Lazare Carnot.

When a new member was admitted to this club, he was solemnly presented with a rose, drank a glass of rose-water to the health of the Rosatis, and was obliged to make a speech in verse.

At his installation Robespierre addressed the assembly with the following stanzas:

"Je vois l'épine avec la rose
Dans les bouquets que vous m'offrez.
Et lorsque vous me célébrez,
Vos vers découragent ma prose.
Tout ce qu'on m'a dit de charmant,
Messieurs, a droit de me confondre,
La rose est votre compliment,
L'épine est la loi d'y répondre.

"A vos bontés lorsque j'y pense,
Ma foi je n'y vois pas d'excès;
Et le tableau de vos succès
Affaiblit ma reconnaissance;
Pour de semblables jardiniers
Le sacrifice est peu de chose;
Quand on est si riche en lauriers,
On peut bien donner une Rose."[1]

Various poems by Robespierre are still in existence. A book was published in Paris in 1830, under the title *Mémoires authentiques de Robespierre.* The bookseller and publisher, Moreau Rosier, gave a very improbable story about the history of these Memoirs. They were really written by some one who had made a close and careful study of the period of the Revolution, and contained for the most part fairly accurate facts. But Charlotte Robespierre, who was still alive in 1830, publicly protested against these Memoirs, declaring them to be spurious, and pointing out that her brother could not have had leisure to write such a book during his busy political life. And for this reason not much value must be attached to the well-known drinking song, which, according to the author, had been composed and recited by Robespierre in the circle of the Rosatis.

The authentic poems which still exist by him prove sufficiently that he made his mark in the Rosatis Club.

His work became of more importance, however, when the well-known Académie d'Arras elected him as its member in 1783. This Academy distinguished itself by its strict scientific studies of literature, philosophy, and history, and Robespierre was thus

[1] J. Hermann, *Leben Robespierre's*, 1871.

honoured on account of his very eloquent and able speeches at the bar. The young advocate now thought to establish his claim to literary distinction by replying to the prize questions of other academies.

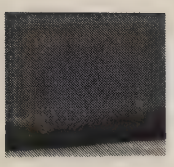
In 1784 the Académie de Metz proposed the following prize subject: "Quelle est l'origine du préjugé qui étend sur la famille d'un coupable, l'opprobre attaché aux peines qui ont été décernées contre lui? Le préjugé est-il utile? Quels seraient les moyens de le détruire?"

Twenty-two replies were sent in, among them one by Robespierre with the motto "*Quod genus hoc hominum quæve hunc tam barbara morem permittit patria*" (Virgil).

He maintained that this prejudice was barbarous, and that it could be done away with by declaring all citizens equal before the law. The academy awarded prizes to two replies: the first to Pierre Louis de Lacretelle, from Metz, contributor to the *Mercure de France*, which appeared in Paris; the second to Robespierre, both with a gold medal.

He also tried his hand at purely literary work. In 1785 the Academy of Amiens offered a prize for an *Eloge de Jean-Baptist*—Louis Gresset, the well-known author of *Vert-Vert*.

Gresset (1709—1777) was a very witty and entertaining poet, who related in his *Vert-Vert* (1753) the humorous history of a parrot. Polly, while in a convent, had learnt all kinds of proper and edifying words and expressions through the affectionate attention of the nuns, but, on falling into the hands of some rough sailors, had soon changed her polished



manners and acquired quite a different conversational tone and vocabulary. On her return to her first residence, the convent, her former teachers, the nuns, were greatly shocked and extremely indignant at her degeneration, and punished her with meagre and scanty food ; but Polly soon improved her manners and her language, and her pious mistresses again bountifully supplied her with all kinds of delicacies—of which she died.

The humorous tone of this story—afterwards repeated in his *Carème impromptu* and *Le Lutrin vivant*—the witty description of convent life, secured Gresset many friends, so that he was elected member of the Académie française, notwithstanding the fact of his having been a Jesuit for some little time.[1]

Except Robespierre, who obtained for his *Eloge de Gresset* an honourable mention, none of the other competitors were successful.

He had his essay printed (Londres et Paris, Royez 1786 : 8vo, 48 pages), and sent copies to his friends of the Rosatis Club, who praised his work enthusiastically, especially Dubois de Fosseux, afterwards Mayor of Atrecht.

In the *Mémoires sur Carnot par son fils* (Paris 1861) the author stated that Dubois de Fosseux was "a man of great wit and taste, in every respect, whose table was richly provided *de bons mets et de bons mots*" (p. 98).

Yet a similar work to the *Eloge de Gresset* is ascribed to Robespierre : *Eloge de Messire Charles*

[1] The works of Gresset have been published by Renouard, 1811. Also see Laharpe, 1865.

Mercier-Dupaty, président au parlement de Bordeaux, par Maximilien Robespierre (1789). In spite of a great amount of work and many occupations, he still found time for social intercourse, and, according to his sister, spent his evenings amongst his relatives or his numerous friends and acquaintances in Atrecht. He visited all the best families, and among his greatest friends counted Dubois de Fosseux; Ruzé, Attorney-General; and Buissart, an intimate friend of Carnot.

He must have met Carnot on several occasions at that time, and young Carnot was doubtless in error when stating in his Memoirs that his father hardly knew Robespierre at the National Convention in September 1792. These Memoirs appeared in 1861, and at that time every one had learnt to regard Robespierre as the blood-thirsty leader of the Terreur, thanks to the representations of the historians of the reaction.

His sister remarked that he used to be very lively in company, and a great favourite with the ladies; he even wrote a gallant little poem, which is still in existence:

"Crois moi, jeune et belle Ophélie
Quoiqu'en dise le monde et malgré ton miroir
Contente d'être belle et de n'en rien savoir,
Garde toujours ta modestie;
Sur le pouvoir de tes appas
Démente toujours alarmée:
Tu n'en seras que mieux aimée
Si tu crains de ne l'être pas." [1]

It is not known who this belle Ophélie was. Most

[1] Printed in 1790 by Rivarol in his *Actes des Apôtres*.

of the ladies were very favourably disposed towards him. During the reign of Terror, Madame Chabot —a lady who was quite unknown to him—showed her admiration in a much more acceptable manner by leaving him her fortune. His opponents declared that he was always surrounded by a "*nuée de femmes*," and also that his applause in the Jacobin club was mainly from the citoyennes. His appearance—by no means handsome—could not account for this; it was his eloquence, the force of his reasoning, the strong emphasis with which he pronounced his convictions, his singularly sweet voice, which won him the enthusiastic approval of his female listeners.

One of his peculiarities was his absent-mindedness: he frequently became lost in thought while in company, quite oblivious of all that passed around him; he loved his dreams of liberty, his plans for reforming the government after the theories of Rousseau, which he wished to put into practice on his election, by a great majority, as member of the Third Estate in the States-General (1789).

XII

THE CONSPIRACY OF THERMIDOR AN II

(July—August 1794)

THE political life of Robespierre began in May 1789, and was cut off on 9 Thermidor an II (July 27th, 1794).

So much has been written about his life that it is not necessary to repeat here what has become so familiar to every one.

Therefore, after having thrown some light on the least known part of his history, we will return to the great storm of Thermidor, of which we witnessed the hundredth anniversary a few years ago. It was already clear, at the Festival to the Supreme Being, that Robespierre possessed many enemies. To them belonged Fouché, who had known him at Atrecht, where he gained his livelihood by giving lessons. Later they met in Paris, and he soon saw that Robespierre was destined to play an important rôle. A very clever intriguer, who understood, par excellence, the art of fishing in troubled waters, he was born with the qualities of a spy and an informer, and with the ambition of one day becoming minister of police.

He started with the idea of becoming Robespierre's

brother-in-law, and paid court to Charlotte Robespierre, who was then thirty years of age and a good-looking young woman enough. Fouché was horribly ugly, but showed himself witty and so deeply enamoured of Charlotte that she consulted her brother about her admirer. Robespierre, who believed in the good faith and democratic principles of Fouché, did not raise any objections to his advances; but the manner in which her wooer acted at Lyons spoiled all.

In May 1793 Lyons had declared for the Girondins, who had been defeated in Paris, and it was decided at the capital to besiege the southern city. The siege lasted from August 8th to October 8th, 1793. Although it was no fortress, the favourable position of the town had enabled the inhabitants to place themselves in a state of defence.

General Kellermann was sent with eight thousand men to take it, and commenced the bombardment on August 24th. The Convention repeatedly supplied fresh troops, and also sent three of its members, amongst them the half-paralysed Couthon. This great friend of Robespierre, who could only walk with the assistance of crutches, inspired his soldiers with the utmost heroism, and took Lyons by storm on October 8th. The Convention decided now to punish the rebels, to destroy the city, and to change its name into Commune Affranchie. Couthon behaved with moderation and humanity. He gave the rebels time to leave the town, and then had himself carried in a large chair to la Place Belcour; surrounded by his colleagues, the new municipal council, he had himself taken to one of the finest houses, and knocked

with a silver hammer against the walls, exclaiming: "In the name of the law, I destroy you." The Lyonese Jacobins, greatly enraged at this, appealed to their Parisian brethren, and Robespierre prudently recalled his friend Couthon, appointing in his place Collot d'Herbois, the former actor, Ronsin, the Hébertist general, and Fouché.

And now Fouché set to work with the guillotine and wrote to Paris: "*La terreur, la salutaire terreur, est vraiment ici à l'ordre du jour.*" As the guillotine could not accomplish the work quickly enough, Fouché had sixty-four young fellows shot at the cannon's mouth outside the town. (November 4th, 1793.); those who did not fall immediately were cut down by the swords of the cavalry. On November 5th, two hundred and nine prisoners were shot down by the terrible Fouché. He had the finest streets blown up by powder-mines, and spent fifteen million francs on explosives to destroy houses to the value of three hundred million francs.

Robespierre persuaded the Committee to recall Fouché (March 27th, 1794); and as soon as he arrived in Paris, he went to the great leader to defend himself. Charlotte Robespierre, who was present at the interview, thus described it:

"My brother demanded of him an account of the blood he had spilt, and reproached him for his conduct in so forcible a manner that Fouché turned deadly pale and trembled before him. He stammered some excuses, and threw everything upon the extreme gravity of the situation.

"Robespierre emphatically replied that there was

no excuse for the cruelties committed by him; that Lyons had defied the law, but that this was no reason for having unarmed enemies shot en masse."

From this moment Fouché became his bitterest enemy, and, not daring to attack him openly, worked in the dark with slander, calumny, and intrigue. Tallien attached himself closely to him, and they were joined by other traitors as infamous as themselves —Rovère, Bourdon de l'Oise, Thuriot, Lecointre, Légendre, and Fréron.

Lecointre had become notorious on the 5th and 6th of October 1789, when the froth of the Parisian population had forced the King and Queen to leave the palace at Versailles for the Tuileries. As commander of the National Guards at Versailles, he had supported the rabble and assisted them in their object. The butcher Légendre had made himself known on June 20th, 1792, when, after forcibly entering the Tuileries with the mob, he had hurled the vilest insults at the hapless Louis XVI. Fréron was a kind of leader of what might be called, in 1794 also, *la jeunesse dorée*. With these three rogues were some blood-thirsty villains like Carrier, the Nero of Nantes, and the nobleman Barras, all of whom were afraid that Robespierre would punish their atrocities. Fouché tried to increase the number of conspirators by spreading the rumour that Robespierre had prepared a list of those members of the Convention who were to be brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The names of eighteen representatives of the Legislative Assembly were whispered as the first to be arrested.

As some of the members of the Convention had

become unnecessarily anxious, and dared hardly leave their dwellings, Couthon thought it advisable to point out, on June 14th, that this rumour was perfectly unfounded. The enemies of Robespierre mentioned various names—amongst them some of the Committee of General Safety—in order to cause friction between the two committees. In the Committee of Public Safety, Robespierre was supported by the majority, but Fouché worked on successfully in the dark. He stated in his Memoirs: "I went straight to those of Robespierre's colleagues in the government of the Terreur whom I knew to be envious and afraid of his boundless popularity. I revealed to Collot d'Herbois, to Carnot, and Billaud-Varenne, the designs of the modern Appius."[1]

It is needless to point out that the dissolute actor, Collot d'Herbois, was not slow in joining the alliance; for was he not also responsible for the terrible barbarities in Lyons?

Some historians relate that Robespierre withdrew from the Committee of Public Safety a few weeks before Thermidor. But several orders signed by him during that period prove his presence in the Committee at that time. From the Registers of the Committee of Public Safety it appears that during six weeks Robespierre was only absent seven days;[2] and yet he declared, in his very last speech in the Convention, that he had withdrawn, owing to his disgust at the course of events. The influence of Carnot, supported by

[1] Quoted by E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 582.

[2] Proved by E. Hamel from archives. See *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 599.

the two adventurers, Collot d'Herbois and Billaud-Varenne, was of great weight in the Committee at that period. Some efforts were made at the last moment to restore harmony between the two great committees. In the meeting of July 22nd (4 Thermidor), there seemed to be a chance of success. Robespierre's bosom friend Saint-Just was entrusted with the task of bringing a report before the Convention "upon the general situation of the Republic." In the following meeting the prophecy of reconciliation seemed still more likely to be fulfilled. The false Billaud-Varenne said to Robespierre: "We are all your friends; we have always stood together."

The allied conspirators, on hearing this, were greatly alarmed; and all the more so when Couthon had the courage to declare, two days after, in the club of the Jacobins, that there were some men in the Convention "whose hands were full of the spoils of the Republic, and reeking with the blood of the guiltless, whom they had slain." Then unhesitatingly he enumerated the offenders: "les Fouché, les Tallien, les Carrier, les Rovère, les Bourdons de l'Oise."

Not a moment was now to be lost for the conspirators. Tallien, driven to desperation by the receipt of Thérézia's dagger, was fully aware that her postponed trial might be resumed at any moment in the event of Robespierre being once more victorious.

Talk was idle; instant action was necessary; Robespierre, the dictator, as they called him, must fall; and relying on the honesty and the impartiality of the greater number in the Convention, the great leader did not prevent his foes from taking their last measures.

XIII

THE RAGE OF THE THERMIDORIANS

IT is necessary that those who wish thoroughly to understand the events of 8, 9, and 10 Thermidor (July 26th-28th, 1794) should be made fully acquainted with Robespierre's actions from the date of the Festival to the Supreme Being (June 8th) to his fall (July 27th).

The conspiracy of the Thermidorians was not only founded on personal offences; there were more serious accusations against Robespierre. The proposal and acceptance of the decree which acknowledged the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul would be used to charge him with turning counter-revolutionary. He was well aware of this, and also of the fact that he was accused of being a dictator and a tyrant. Had he not been warned by the repeated insults of his colleagues in the Convention? A weapon, therefore, must be found with which to defeat his enemies, and he conceived the fatal project of proposing the reform of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Couthon appeared in the Convention on June 10th, with a "*projet de reforme*" of this tribunal in the name of the Committee of Public Safety; but in reality this proposal originated solely with Robespierre and Couthon. There had often been complaints that the Tribunal was unable to perform its duties

regularly, owing to the frequent absence of some members of the jury, and it was therefore proposed to have fifty jurors nominated by the government.

Already in this scheme a very dangerous element was lurking. The jury were always chosen by election, in order that the people should be represented at the administration of justice. A jury nominated by the Convention was bound to appear as its instrument and that of the Committees. Couthon also formulated the object of the Tribunal as follows: "The Revolutionary Tribunal is instituted to punish the enemies of the people."

Thereupon followed a very elastic definition of the enemies of the people: they were those who wished to restore the monarchy; those who wished to abolish the Convention; those military commanders who had betrayed the Republic by treating with the enemies of the country; those who caused a scarcity of the necessities of life; those who agitated the people by false rumours; those who corrupted the public morals.

Then followed a clause which provided that only capital punishment—the extreme penalty of the law—would be applied to these offences.

Afterwards this last article was used as a pretext for holding Robespierre responsible for all the blood which was shed during the Reign of Terror; and it is to be regretted that the drastic law of June 10th has indeed given cause for this accusation.

The law also contained a clause which stated that every citizen, on discovering conspirators and counter-revolutionists, was obliged to bring them before the government. Only the Convention, the two com-

mittees, the commissioners (of the Convention), and the public prosecutor, could commit the accused persons for trial before the Tribunal.

At this trial witnesses might be heard if it was deemed necessary ; otherwise justice was administered without them. The accused could not be assisted by counsel, but would find his support in the patriotic members of the jury (art. 16). It is a great pity that Robespierre ventured to propose measures so contrary to all right and justice while the insults of his enemies were still fresh in his memory. It must be remembered, however, that one attempt had already been made on his life by a certain fanatic, Cécile Rénault, and also, that on every side intriguers were plotting for his downfall. As to this attempt on Robespierre's life, it was hardly of much significance. Cécile Rénault—a young girl of twenty, and the daughter of a shopkeeper in the rue de la Lanterne—had called at the house of Duplay in the evening of May 24th, and insisted on seeing Robespierre. When she was told that he had gone out she became very angry, and in a violent manner declared that Robespierre, as state official, ought to be accessible to any one who wished to speak with him. Her behaviour led to her arrest, and it was easy to predict her fate when she was found in possession of two daggers. At her examination she asserted that she had visited Robespierre in order to become acquainted with a tyrant, and that she preferred to obey one king rather than fifty thousand despots.

When Couthon (June 10th) had proposed the new Act for reforming the Tribunal, a member of the Convention—Ruamps, a well-known staunch democrat

—shouted: "I will blow my brains out if this Act passes." He demanded that the discussion of the proposal should be deferred.

Robespierre, who was opposed to this adjournment, exclaimed excitedly: "By pursuing the enemies and murderers of the people we expose ourselves to private assassins. We are quite willing to die if it will save the Convention and the country."

After this speech the assembly decided to discuss the new law at once, and in the evening it was passed, with all the perilous clauses which it contained. The Convention was impressed by Robespierre's words, and voted for the new Act, article by article. The victory gained by him was a dangerous one, and from the moment it was won he became in a manner responsible for every sentence of the Tribunal. With some justice it could be maintained later all that he was the author of the executions of the Terreur. This opinion has been so often expressed by later historians, even by Michelet, that it is not to be wondered at that Robespierre's name was only mentioned in connection with murder and blood-thirstiness.

It is not quite certain whether the law of June 10th was proposed with the approval of the Committee of Public Safety. It is related that the next day Robespierre was furiously attacked by Billaud-Varenne, who asked him scornfully: "Are we then henceforth under the will of one man alone?"

And Robespierre is said to have replied:

"I see well that I am alone. . . . There exists a party which means to ruin me. Henceforth I know you, Billaud. . . ."

"And I also know you: you are a counter-Revolutionist. . . ."

It is related that Robespierre was greatly agitated at this accusation, and consented that the law should once more be brought before the Committee for approval.[1]

The Convention reconsidered the law in so far as to grant the right of arresting its members to the assembly alone. Through this, Robespierre lost the right to have a representative arrested in the name of the Committee of Public Safety. All the benefits which he had hoped to reap by the new law were now lost, and there remained only the abuse which partial historians were to hurl at him later. The guillotine, which became more and more hated, had been removed by order of the Committee of General Safety from the Place de la Révolution (Place de la Concorde) to a far corner of Paris, la barrière du Trône.

And through the application of the new law of June 10th the death-sentences continually multiplied; for this reason the last weeks of July 1794 are called the period of la Grande Terreur.

Robespierre, who hardly knew how to act, seemed quite discouraged. "All is lost," he said. "I see no one who is able to save the country." While the conspirators used every means to bring about his fall, he occupied his time with preparing an oration, which he intended to deliver in the Convention. It has been said that during his last days he made a pilgrimage to Ermenonville, to visit the grave of his master Jean

[1] According to the manuscript of Mme. le Bas; see Hamel, p. 718.

Jacques Rousseau. But this has not been proved. He certainly was in Paris during the days preceding 8 Thermidor (July 26th), and was seen walking in the Champs Elysées near the jardin Marbœuf with Eléonore Duplay, always accompanied by his faithful dog Bruant.[1] For the moment they tried to forget political anxieties and the threatening danger. He relied on the effect of his next great political oration in the Convention, and felt happy for the nonce, as he looked into the bright eyes of his Eléonore, which encouraged him in this hope.

[1] Elie Sorin, *Histoire de la République Française*, 1875, p. 631.

XIV

RESULTS OF THE LAW OF JUNE 10TH

IT appeared already that Robespierre's victory of June 10th was to yield him but very bitter fruit. The next day, the Opposition, led by Bourdon de l'Oise, opened the attack. This personal enemy of Robespierre was not only a man of very objectionable appearance, but also of disreputable character. Robespierre had accused him of having shot at the daughter of the citoyen Boulanger, and said of him that he looked like one who was contemplating a fresh crime.[1]

This cowardly rogue began the sitting of June 11th —at which no one from the Committee was present— by complaining bitterly that the decree of the preceding day had made it possible to have a member arrested without the sanction of the Convention itself, and proposed, therefore, that no representative should be taken before the Tribunal without a previous order for his arrest from the people's parliament. Another member, Delbrel, who was little known, remarked hereupon that this implied nothing less than a covert accusation against the two committees. Bourdon, who did not feel at ease, insisted on putting the question to

[1] *Papiers inédits*, II., p. 20; quoted by Hamel, III., p. 555.

the vote ; but the well-known jurist, Merlin de Douai, declared that the motion was superfluous, as nobody would be able to deprive the Convention of its incontestable right to decide itself about the arrest of its own members ; and the assembly decided to this effect.

But the majority of the Committee of Public Safety considered the attack of Bourdon as an insult ; for indirectly it was hinted that the law of June 10th was solely made with the object of empowering the Committee to dispose of the lives of the people's representatives at their own free will. In spite of the opposition of Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois—who were at one with the scheming Thermidorians—Couthon was instructed to appeal against the interpretation current in the Convention, and during the morning sitting of June 12th he expressed his extreme indignation at the fact that the Committee had been slandered, and emphatically declared that not one of its members had ever dreamt of attacking the prerogative of the sovereign assembly.

It must be acknowledged that Couthon was probably not quite honest in stating this. Robespierre had most certainly intended to strike a blow at the intriguing representatives ; but it ought not to be forgotten that he alone would have been powerless to imprison any member, as he was by no means sure of a majority in the Committee.

Couthon's speech was warmly applauded. Bourdon saw at once that he had made a mistake on the preceding day, but, like the coward he was, tried to mend matters by remarking, in a somewhat unsteady voice,

that through the course of circumstances he thought to have been justified in "feeling some disquietude, possibly ill-founded," adding with still more cowardice: "I esteem Couthon, I esteem the Committee, I esteem the immovable Mountain which has saved Liberty!" The name Mountain dated from October 1st, 1791, when the sittings of the Legislative Assembly began. The Right was then formed by the supporters of the constitutional monarchy—the Girondins; but the Left, particularly the extreme Left, were seated on the highest forms, and therefore called *La Montagne*—and these counted amongst them all the most zealous Republicans, including Carnot, Prieur (de la Marne), and Merlin de Thionville. After Bourdon's speech, Robespierre rose and said: "The last speaker has sought in his address to separate the Committee from the Mountain: the Convention, the Mountain, and the Committee, are all one. Every representative of the people who truly loves freedom, and is resolved to die for his country, belongs to the Mountain!"

The members rose from their seats and cheered loudly at these words; it was a critical moment for Bourdon. Robespierre continued, and pointed out that the Mountain had taken the lead in the Revolution, thanks to its disinterested zeal and its noble patriotism; that the Mountain could never be associated with intriguers and scoundrels; and that a montagnard would always remain "*un patriote pur, raisonnable, et sublime.*" It would be an outrage to the country, it would be equal to the massacre of the people, if it were suffered that some intriguers, doubly contemptible for their greater hypocrisy, should endeavour to gain

over a part of the Mountain and make themselves leaders of a party.

Bourdon interrupted him with the remark that he never aimed at becoming a party leader, but Robespierre took no notice of the interruption, and continued: "It would be the utmost disgrace if some of our colleagues, misguided by slander about our intentions and about the object of our work . . ."

But Bourdon again interrupted him: "I demand the proof of what has been said. It is quite clear that he is trying to make me out a rogue."

Robespierre raised his voice: "I demand in the name of the country that I be allowed to speak. I have not mentioned Bourdon; woe to him who mentions himself."

Bourdon shouted: "Let Robespierre prove . . ." But the latter continued: "I cannot prevent it if he recognises himself in the portrait which duty has obliged me to paint. The Mountain is invulnerable, without fault or blemish, and the plotters do not belong to the Mountain."

"Name them," cried a voice.

"I shall name them as soon as it is necessary."

This reply was distinctly a political mistake. He should at once have mentioned openly the names of Tallien, Fouché, Rovère, Carrier, Lecointre, Légendre; he should have called attention to the fact that these members had committed the most terrible atrocities in Lyons, Nantes, Marseilles, and Bordeaux, in the name of the Convention, and had enriched themselves with the property of their victims.

He would have been victorious on June 12th, and

there would have been no 9 Thermidor for him. By omitting this, he gave these rascals—especially Tallien and Fouché—the opportunity of working on the uneasy minds of many members, by stating that their names would be mentioned.

Bourdon de l'Oise did not retaliate, but left the Convention; he was taken ill from pure fright, and compelled to keep his room for several days. Although this poltroon still appeared from time to time during the days of Thermidor, it may be stated here that, from the 9th of that month, he went over to the reactionary party, but at last received his reward; in 1797 he was banished, and died in exile.

Robespierre continued his speech, and related that three members of the Convention had openly condemned the law of June 10th on the evening of that date, had insulted and assaulted the agents of the government, and further, had stated that the Committees employed twenty thousand spies. The names of these three were not mentioned, but Tallien was amongst them. The agents had not retaliated, lest it should be said that representatives of the people had been ill-treated by the servants of the government.

Tallien rose and maintained that the incident had not taken place on the 10th, but on the 11th. But Billaud-Varenne, the false Billaud, came ostensibly to the assistance of his colleague Robespierre, and declared that Tallien's statement was beside the truth; that the incident had occurred on the 10th—concluding: "Citoyens, we will remain united; the conspirators will perish, and the country will be saved."

Why was Robespierre not shrewd enough to guess the hidden meaning of these words? Why did he not see the trap which was set for him? The plot was not ripe as yet, and the least imprudence might cost the conspirators their lives; Robespierre had still too many supporters in the Convention; the mine was not to spring before its time.

XV

THE RED SHIRTS

THE animosity of Fouché towards Robespierre was further stimulated by some remarks of the latter in the meeting of the Jacobins (June 11th, 1794), of which Fouché was chairman on that evening. Robespierre enjoyed an extraordinary popularity in this club, but still there was always a more or less small minority which opposed him.

That night an address was being discussed from the patriots at Nevers, who complained of persecution and violence. At that place the population was mostly Hébertist, and the decree with regard to the Supreme Being had been ignored, owing to the influence of Anaxagoras Chaumette, who had ruled there for a little time. This great Hébertist had been guillotined on April 10th—five days after Danton's death—under the charge of having taken part in the "*affaire des prisons.*"

As soon as the discussion on the address was opened, Robespierre rose, requesting the chairman, Fouché, to give some information about the position of affairs in Nevers, as he had formerly been on a mission to the departement la Nièvre.

Fouché seemed ill at ease when he had to reply,

and disposed of that duty by declaiming against his former friend Chaumette with all kinds of abusive and insulting phrases.

Robespierre responded to this uncalled-for attack in an indignant tone: "The question here is not of throwing mud on the tomb of Chaumette, for that monster has perished on the scaffold; it would have been better to challenge him before his death. For a long time harm has been done everywhere by speaking the language of the Republicans, some vomiting abuses and curses against Danton, whose accomplices they were but just lately. There are others who seem all on fire in defence of the Committee of Public Safety, whilst secretly sharpening their daggers against it."

Fouché turned pale, trembled, and could hardly stammer a reply.

It was time to be avenged. But Robespierre could still count on the majority of the Convention and the Jacobins, and an open attack was therefore too risky; secretly and by insinuations his power had to be undermined; the members of the Right and of the extreme Left had to be frightened by telling them that Robespierre had made lists of "*impurs*," and that their names figured on those lists; all the horrors of the Reign of Terror were to be attributed to Robespierre; the law of June 10th was his work.

There appeared much in the accusation which was superficially true. The guillotine-carts, which sometimes carried more than fifty condemned persons at a time to the scaffold, excited the utmost detestation. The following statistics will give an idea of the number

of executions during the months Prairial, Messidor, and Thermidor.[1]

Prairial (from the 1st to the 22nd) : accused 408 ; acquitted 114 ; imprisoned 13; guillotined 281. Prairial (after the law of the 22nd from the 22nd to the 30th) : accused 272 ; acquitted 42 ; imprisoned 2 ; guillotined 228.

Messidor : accused 1000 ; acquitted 194 ; imprisoned 10 ; guillotined 796.

Thermidor (from the 1st to the 9th) : accused 426 ; acquitted 81 ; imprisoned 3 ; guillotined 342.

All this bloodshed was laid to Robespierre's account, as the law of 22 Prairial (June 10th) was his doing. The 796 death-sentences of Messidor (June 19th to July 18th) could be hurled at him, and there was indeed no delay in making use of this as a weapon. Another means of striking him was manufactured in the Committee of General Safety.

Elie Lacoste, one of its members, and a strong opponent of Robespierre, was entrusted with the report about the case of Cécile Rénault, who had attempted an assault on Robespierre's life, whilst admitting quite openly her royalist tendencies. In addition to this was the real assault on Collot d'Herbois, by a certain Ladmiral.

In the meeting of the Convention on June 14th, Lacoste produced his report, in which reference was made to more than fifty accused who were implicated with Ladmiral and Cécile Rénault. He stated that the two assaults were connected with some foreign con-

[1] According to the thorough researches of the Archivist Campardon, *Le Tribunal révolutionnaire*, Tome II., p. 220.

spiracies, and that Cécile was the instrument of Pitt. For that reason, her father, mother, and aunt were also accused, particularly as portraits of Louis XVI., and Marie Antoinette had been found in their dwellings. Some other persons were added, who had spoken in a threatening and contemptuous tone about Robespierre. Besides, there were the ladies de Saint-Amaranthe, who had formerly belonged to the aristocracy. These women kept a gambling house at the Galerie du Palais Royal, No. 50. They were of easy principles, and with their friends of a similar disposition they entertained visitors, who indulged in the delights of trente-et-un and other games in defiance of the law. To be safe from police interference, the ladies de Saint-Amaranthe had made an arrangement with the police officers of their section, by which they would be left in peace for a consideration of eight louis d'or per evening.

Madame de Saint-Amaranthe, the divorced wife of a cavalry officer, and her daughter—afterwards married to a certain de Sartines—had already been notorious on account of their immoral conduct before the Revolution.

Their gambling den was neutral ground, where noblemen, artists, and actors, were wont to assemble. Mirabeau had gambled here for high stakes, and all the rakes of the Revolution were frequent visitors; while Hérault-Séchelles and Danton were amongst their most intimate guests. Unfortunately, young Augustin Robespierre and the two Duplays—cousins of the family in the rue Saint-Honoré—had been introduced there by the actor Michot. When Robespierre

heard this, he reprimanded his brother and the two Duplays with some severity, and thus put an end to their visits to the notorious resort.

The Committee of General Safety drew these women into the case of Cécile Rénault, because all kinds of intrigues were being hatched in their drawing-rooms, particularly by foreigners; but the object of the Committee was evidently disguised.

It was decided that all the prisoners, if they were condemned to death, should be taken to the scaffold in red shirts, like parricides or regicides. This spectacle was designed to give the impression that the slight danger to which Robespierre had been exposed at Cécile Renault's visit, could only be atoned for by sacrificing fifty people as regicides. With the "chemises rouges" it was intended to point at the omnipotence of Robespierre, at his efforts to become dictator, with which the Girondins had always charged him formerly.

Robespierre himself had no influence whatever on the trial and execution of the "chemises rouges"; but all sorts of libellous insinuations were invented to do him harm. It was said that Cécile had wanted to kill him because he had had her lover guillotined—a statement which represented Robespierre as possessing the power of having citizens executed at his own free will.

Another absurd story was told about the family de Saint-Amaranthe. It was whispered that Robespierre had been introduced by the actor Trial. As his brother Augustin had really been introduced there by another actor, it suited the slanderers to confuse the two brothers.

It was further rumoured that Robespierre had supped at the house of these ladies, and, after having drunk far too much wine, he had—"*au milieu des fumées de vin*"—told the company "*de redoutables sécrets.*" Hence his desire now to silence these women for ever by the guillotine. As if they could not have informed the judge of all this before their execution!

The whole absurdity of the tale becomes clearer when it is explained that Robespierre was supposed to have been at the reception of the Saint-Amaranthes in May—"when the monster had soaked himself in wine"—while, as a matter of fact, Madame had been arrested in March, and taken to the prison Sainte Pélagie on April 1st, 1794.[1] Besides, the actor Trial, who was supposed to have taken Robespierre to the ill-famed house, always emphatically denied this.

After hearing Lacoste's report, the Convention decided that the various accused persons should be committed before the Tribunal, and the public prosecutor was ordered to search everywhere in the prisons and departments for accomplices in these foreign plots: hence new victims during the month of Messidor, for whose death no one but Robespierre would be held responsible.

[1] According to the *Archives de la préfecture de la police*, quoted by E. Hamel.

XVI

ROBESPIERRE WITHDRAWS

MENTION has already been made of the charge brought by Vadier—member of the Committee of General Safety—against the half-witted Cathérine Théot, and some others, who had invented a new kind of religion. These partisans of "the Mother of God" had always shown a great respect for Robespierre, as the founder of the religion devoted to the Supreme Being; and it was therefore easy to insert in the charge a great deal that was malicious and hurtful to him.

It has been shown that through the energetic interference of Robespierre the persecution of these innocent fanatics was not proceeded with.

Fouquier-Tinville, the public prosecutor, appeared at the evening sitting of the Committee of Public Safety with the documents relative to the case of Cathérine Théot. But Robespierre, exercising the great power which he still possessed during the last days of Prairial, ordered Fouquier to dismiss the charge, as he wished to protect the Republic against such criminal stupidity.

Besides, the charge was mainly concocted to make him appear in a ridiculous, if not suspicious, light in the Convention.

Fouquier went immediately to the sitting of the Committee of General Safety, and stated that Robespierre had forbidden the execution of Cathérine Théot and her flock, exclaiming: "Il, il, il . . . au nom du Comité de Salut Public s'y oppose!"[1]

From this thrice-repeated "il" appears the great power and influence of Robespierre over the members of the Committees; and this was represented by his enemies as the origin of his attempt at the dictatorship. The foreign newspapers referred to him as the head of the French Republic, and spoke of him ironically as Maximilien I., King of France and Navarre.

In a pamphlet, which appeared after Robespierre's death, the author said: "Journalists and literary men placed him above the heroes of antiquity. Europe occupied itself with him, was astonished at his power, and regarded him as the only disposer of our destinies."[2]

And still the so-called dictator lost in power and influence, through the skilful manœuvres of his numerous enemies; the law of June 10th certainly did not improve his position.

He had thought that, by this law, he would have been able to put Tallien, Bourdon, Fouché, Fréron, and Barras, the most dangerous members of the Convention, out of harm's way; but it soon appeared that this was impossible.

In the evening sitting of the Committee on June

[1] *Mémoires de Fouquier-Tinville*, p. 10.

[2] Montjoie, *Histoire de la conjuration de Robespierre* (1794 after Thermidor).

14th, Robespierre had insisted on taking strong and severe measures against them.

Billaud-Varenne, who had decided on his ruin, gave an account of this; and if his version is not strictly correct from a historical point of view, it is in the main fairly accurate. Billaud stated:

"He asked whether we intended to make up our minds to attack the new factions or perish by their manœuvres. He assailed and accused various deputies one after another."

Billaud, growing impatient, rose and said to him:

"Robespierre, for a long time you have sought to win us over by frightening us, with the object of striking at our colleagues. Thus acted the Hébertists and other counter-revolutionists, who all shared the same fate. There are six of us here who profess the dogma of the integrity of the national assembly. Should you desire anything further from our Convention, then let me assure you, in the name of all my colleagues, that your only way to arrive at it will be over our dead bodies."[1]

When Billaud-Varenne wrote this he was under the influence of the Thermidorian reaction, and in fear of his life. He attributed words to himself which he had probably never uttered, but it is certainly true that, according to his secret understanding with Tallien, Fouché, and their friends, he was bound to oppose the intention of Robespierre to handicap the plotting deputies.

Robespierre was never a strong man, and suffered

[1] Billaud-Varenne, *Première Réponse des Membres du Comité* (1794 af Thermidor).

a great deal from nervous debility; it is therefore hardly to be wondered at that all this adversity and the universal plotting of his enemies soon told on his sensitive temperament; he fell into a kind of stupor, and decided to relinquish the political leadership for the time being. The day before his fall he stated distinctly enough in the Convention:

"I will confine myself to saying that for more than six weeks the nature and the force of calumny, the powerlessness of doing the right and of arresting evil, obliged me to abandon my functions as member of the Committee of Public Safety, and I swear to you that in doing this I only studied my reason and my country. I prefer my capacity of deputy to that of member of the Committee, but before all else I place my French citizenship."

This statement is somewhat exaggerated.

Robespierre left the chief direction of the government to his colleagues, but was repeatedly present at the Committee. He objected to sign everything which, in accordance with his own law of June 10th, would send more victims to the guillotine. In his eyes this Act had failed in its object, and without doubt he reproached himself for being led away in a moment of excitement to introduce such a law.

Saint-Just declared that Robespierre persisted in opposing in the Committee the execution of so many suspects, "against this promptitude in delivering a thunderbolt at every moment."[1]

From the archives (*Régistre des déliberations et*

[1] Ernest Hamel, *Vie de Robespierre*, III., p. 596.

arrêtés du Comité de Salut public) it has been conclusively proved that he signed various resolutions during Messidor, namely on the 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th, 16th, 18th, 19th, and 28th of that month. He was even accused later of not having taken part in the discussions on important military events in the Committee.

He was absent from its meetings on five occasions only during Messidor. It is clear, therefore, that he had not altogether withdrawn from his functions as member of the Committee, but he had certainly renounced his leadership and influence, as slander greatly undermined his authority, and because he could not prevent the adverse turn of events.

He was tired of the struggle ; he had battled in vain against countless petty annoyances.

It had been evident for a long while past that the able Carnot had taken a dislike to the eloquent lawyer —a thing not uncommon with military men—had feared Robespierre's criticisms on his bold and decisive plans ; and in a moment of anger had even called him " dictator."

When, therefore, the effect of the law of June 10th turned out quite different from what he had anticipated, and the accusation against Cathérine Théot and her followers had caused great friction in the Committees, Robespierre decided to await events.

His friends tried to rouse him to fresh work.

At the meeting of the Jacobin Club on June 14th, Couthon spoke about members of the Convention, who not only sowed discord amongst the representatives of the people, but had depicted the Committee members as Scyllas and Neros. He concluded his speech :

"The Convention and the Committees abhor crime, and desire that it shall be severely punished. The innocent men (*les hommes purs*) have nothing to fear, but those who tremble have only themselves to blame for their fate."[1]

There can be no doubt that Robespierre owed his influence largely to his honesty and uprightness, to his hatred of everything base, treacherous, or disgraceful. He need not have been afraid to show himself anywhere, and his clear conscience allowed him to challenge censure from any one. Had not his aims, his work, always been disinterested and unselfish, for the good of the Republic and the country? Had he ever put himself unduly forward? His friends Saint-Just and Couthon were likewise unassailable.

Saint-Just had been sent during the last months as commissioner of the Convention to the army in Belgium. There the troops of the Emperor of Austria, and the Stadtholder, William V., fought against Marceau and Jourdan, and there, thanks to the youthful ardour and enthusiasm of Saint-Just, the brilliant victory of Fleurus (June 26th, 1794) was won, and the conquest of all Belgium assured.

The notorious Fréron, who was one of the most zealous plotters against Robespierre, expressed himself in the Convention on August 26th, 1794, as follows:

"The Tyrant, who oppressed his colleagues even more than the nation, was so enveloped in the semblance of the most popular virtues, the confidence and esteem of the people formed so sacred a bulwark round

[1] *Moniteur l'Ancien.*

him, that we should have imperilled the country and liberty itself, if we had given way to our impatience to bring him down sooner."

Surely these words, coming from a hostile quarter, are no mean eulogy of Robespierre?

XVII

THE FIRST DAYS OF MESSIDOR

ROBESPIERRE was discouraged and greatly incensed at the course of the events, and the various libels against him, which grew every day more daring and scandalous. His peculiar constitution made him unfit to offer an energetic resistance to his troubles; his weak nerves, which often threatened to give way, prevented him from remaining cool and placid during the combat; he was almost invariably seized with fits of extreme irritability and excitement at the meetings of the Convention, Committee, or the Jacobins. He did his best to become stronger and more vigorous, took long walks daily, even tried riding on horseback in the Parc Monceau, but was suddenly seized with the fear of falling, and was obliged to dismount. During the last days of his life he took exercise by practising at target-shooting with a pistol.[1] Robespierre had something feminine about him, something unusually tender and sensitive. When Billaud-Varenne attacked him in the Committee on June 11th, and called him counter-Revolutionist, he fell sobbing into a chair.

The year 1794, with all its tragical events, was

[1] Fréron, *Papiers inédits.*

certainly not very favourable for a sufferer from weak nerves, especially when the patient was responsible for a great part of the executive government. He decided, therefore, to continue to share in the Government's work, but to keep in the background to preserve the calmness of his mind.

This was sure to become more and more difficult, as the slander went far and deep. Courtois—a very doubtful character—published a report after Thermidor,[1] in which he dared to maintain that Robespierre had had a country house, rented at Maisons-Alfort by one of his friends, a certain Deschamps, who was an aide-de-camp of Hanriot—le général en chef de Paris, a great admirer of Robespierre. Deschamps was said to be "concierge et pourvoyeur" of this residence, where Robespierre, on his visits, committed all kinds of excesses. His worst enemies have not believed this absurd story; Robespierre was entirely unsuspected, and his great popularity was largely due to the universally admitted fact that he was a strictly honest man, straightforward, sober, and incorruptible.

The origin of this libel is easy to trace. The citizen Deschamps and his wife lived in a villa near Maisons-Alfort, and the citoyenne had many friends amongst *les femmes sans culottes*, of whom some were more or less notorious.

All this, however, is of little importance. A political event of 1 Messidor (June 19th) has more significance.

On that day Robespierre brought a charge against the members of the Revolutionary Committee of the

[1] *Rapport de Courtois sur les événements de Thermidor.*

twenty-eighth section of Paris, called La Section de l'Indivisibilité. On the day of his fall he was reproached by Billaud-Varenne with having had arrested "*le meilleur*" Revolutionary Committee of Paris, while Vadier followed him up by declaring this sectional government "*le plus pur de Paris.*"

An impartial and careful inquiry into the matter has proved that the Revolutionary Committee mentioned here was of Hébertist tendencies, and was accused by its own president, citizen Perrier, official at the library de l'Instruction publique—who affirmed that the members of this Committee had lived in excess and extravagance ever since their election. One of them, Hyvert, had disturbed the peace of the district, and had been the cause of a desperate and bloody fight between citizens in front of a butcher's shop.

Another member, Grosler, was accused of having stolen silver candelabra, had preached Atheism, and had stated that the meetings of the Revolutionary Committees were much more important than those of the Convention. He had also said to the members Testan and Guérin, that Robespierre, notwithstanding his confounded decree about the Supreme Being, would be guillotined. Viard had received blood-money from some rich citizens. Lainé had persecuted an Englishman to such an extent that he committed suicide in desperation. Fournier called the members of the Convention "scoundrels and intriguers, who ought to be guillotined."[1]

Robespierre received the address containing this

[1] *Les Archives nationales*, by E. Hamel. *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 606.

charge from the president Perrier officially, and wrote in the margin above: "All persons mentioned herein to be arrested."

From the preceding it should be clear that this sectional government was neither "*le meilleur*" nor "*le plus pur de Paris*"; also that Robespierre was obliged, through this information, to make inquiries and to have the above-mentioned persons examined.

It was acknowledged that he had exercised no more power in the Committee than any other member, and Billaud-Varenne was indignant at the current opinion that men like Robert Lindet, Prieur (*de la Côte d'Or*), and Carnot had even bowed their heads before Robespierre.[1]

Yet another charge was made against him. It was said that Robespierre was the soul of the "Bureau de la Police générale administrative." This office had been instituted some months before, principally to examine the numerous documents which were sent to the Committee of Public Safety. Saint-Just, who was the superintendent of this Bureau, had appointed Lejeune —one of his friends—as general secretary.

When Saint-Just was commissioned to the Northern army, Robespierre took his place until his return.

The latter spoke about this in his defence the day before his fall, and said that he was temporarily charged with the superintendence of the Bureau de Police générale, and had signed about thirty warrants either to liberate those who were unjustly accused, or to put the enemies of the Republic out of harm's way. For that reason he had been held responsible for all

[1] *Réponse de J. N. Billaud à Laurent Lecointre*, p. 94.

the doings of the Committee of General Safety—"this great instrument of the Reign of Terror."

It is a fact, however, that this Bureau never issued writs for arrest unless they had been previously sanctioned by the Committee of Public Safety, and Fouquier-Tinville himself stated that he only received orders for arrest in the meetings of the Committee, and that such documents always bore the superscription :—"Extrait des régistres du Comité de Salut Public." Besides, when Saint-Just returned from the battle-field on June 30th, he at once resumed his duties in the Convention and at the Bureau.

The chief accusation of late historians has been that Robespierre inspired the Revolutionary Tribunal. It was said that he used to arrange interviews with Fouquier, who was completely in his power. Afterwards it was clearly shown that this was a mere invention. Fouquier was the eye-servant of the Committee of General Safety, a fact which has already appeared in the case of Cathérine Théot, and which was confirmed by his attitude after Thermidor.

After Robespierre's death he remained in favour with the Government, and was not attacked by any one for the time being.[1]

Robespierre took no part in the original institution of the Tribunal, but was responsible for its reorganisation by the law of June 10th. It is a fact that many warrants for arrest from the middle of June to the end of July were not signed by Robespierre, Couthon, and St. Just.

[1] Ch. de Héricault, *La Révolution de Thermidor* (*ouvrage couronné par l'Académie française*), 1878, p. 259.

In his speech on July 26th, the former emphatically charged his opponents with having carried out the Terreur, regardless of circumstances, declared war against peaceful citizens, magnified incurable prejudices on trifling matters into a crime, simply in order to hunt out culprits and to render the Revolution formidable to the people themselves.

After Robespierre's death, the Tribunal was on the best possible footing with the conquerors, and Fouquier-Tinville congratulated the Convention "on having known how to distinguish the traitors."[1]

Some jurors of the Tribunal greatly esteemed Robespierre, but the majority were either indifferent or hostile towards him.

After Robespierre's death there was a desire to spread the belief that the two chairmen of the Tribunal —Dumas and Coffinhall—received their orders from Robespierre. It is true that these two judges took his part on July 27th (9 Thermidor), but it is not at all proved that they were under Robespierre's influence.

Amongst the documents left by Dumas after his death there was only one letter from Robespierre, with the request to appear at the meeting of the Committee of Public Safety. It has also since been shown that the blood-thirsty Fouquier-Tinville was opposed to Robespierre, as he conspired with his enemies—Amas, Vadier, and other members of the Committee of General Safety—for his fall.

[1] *Moniteur du 12 Thermidor* (July 30th, 1794).

SAINT-JUST. — *In face p.* 103

XVIII

SAINT-JUST

LOUIS ANTOINE DE SAINT-JUST was repeatedly sent as deputy in the field to the armies at the Rhine and the North, and knew how to spur on the French soldiers to renewed victories; four days after the glorious battle at Fleurus he returned proudly to Paris with the happy news of the victory.

It has been said that Saint-Just was of noble birth, but this was not the case. He was the son of a cavalry officer, who had won "l'ordre royal et militaire de Saint-Louis."

He was born on August 25th, 1767, at Décize, a small town in le Nivernais, and had received a high-class education, studied law, and afterwards taken to literature. At the end of 1789, when twenty-two years old, he published a poem: *Organt, poème en vingt chants*—partly heroic, partly comic—in the style of Ariosto—using as his theme, Charlemagne in combat with the Saxons under Wittekind.

Some time after, in 1791, he attracted general attention by publishing a kind of confession of political faith, under the title: *Esprit de la Révolution et de la Constitution de France*" (Paris 1791; 182 pages). This publication distinctly proclaimed the coming

Revolutionist. He expresses herein hard truths about Louis XVI., whom he draws with one single stroke: "Brusque et faible, parcequ'il pensait le bien, il croyait le faire . . . il voyait de sangfroid toute sa cour piller sa finance, ou plutôt ne voyait rien!"

In a similar way he describes Marie Antoinette: "Deceived rather than deceiving, thoughtless rather than guilty. Marie Antoinette, entirely devoted to pleasure, seemed not to reign in France, but at Trianon."[1] He had great respect for the political ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau, but was not afraid to submit them to reasonable criticism.

Barère related in his memoirs that Saint-Just's book was sold out in a few days,[2] and his reputation as a future statesman seemed assured by it.

This became more apparent on August 10th, 1792, after the fall of Louis XVI., when, at the general elections for the National Convention, Saint-Just obtained the majority in the Department de l'Aisne. He distinguished himself particularly during the struggle against the Girondins, and became member of the Committee of Public Safety on July 10th, 1793. He immediately attached himself closely to Robespierre, who was congenial to him in every respect, and to Couthon, who was elected member of the Committee on the same day as himself.

Saint-Just possessed very regular and handsome features, large blue eyes, sparkling with animation, finely pencilled eyebrows, light, wavy hair, which was

[1] Ernest Hamel, *Vie de Saint-Just*, 1860, I., p. 89.
[2] *Mémoires de Barère, par Hippolyte Carnot et David*, 1843, IV., 107.

parted in the centre after the fashion of 1790, and combed over his forehead, falling round his face and neck.

Like Robespierre, he always took care to be respectably dressed. His large scarf of white muslin was neatly tied; his blue coat, with a stand-up collar and two rows of metal buttons, was always carefully brushed, and set off his small figure to advantage. On his appearance in the Convention on June 30th, the conqueror of Fleurus was cheered from all sides. The day before Paris had celebrated this victory, and Saint-Just possessed at that moment a popularity which nearly equalled that of Robespierre.

The latter was much rejoiced at the return of his friend, but the other members of the Committee were not quite so delighted; they certainly praised him greatly, but gave him at the same time to understand that his presence was considered necessary with the Northern army. Saint-Just, knowing that Robespierre was in need of his assistance, preferred to resume his old duties for the time being; had he left for the scene of battle, he would have saved his own life, but deserted his friend at a moment of danger.

Besides, he was decidedly of Robespierre's opinion that it was not advisable to make too much of the victories at the frontier, as otherwise the peaceful development at home might be obstructed by the rule of the sword.

Saint-Just replaced Robespierre as Chief of the Bureau de Police Générale, and attended the evening sittings of the Committee, where he at once became a power, while Robespierre did not take any active

part in the discussions. The latter, with his anti-military ideas, could not be acquitted of narrow-mindedness. But it was naturally not to the taste of the fanatical supporters of the democracy, when, at the victory of Fleurus—although Saint-Just had had a share in this—"the inhabitants were animated with the greatest joy, . . . made the air re-echo with their outburst of delight and gaiety, dancing in the streets to the sound of patriotic tunes."[1]

Notwithstanding all the triumphs of the Republican armies, Robespierre remained dissatisfied with the course of events in Paris.

His enemies grew bolder and bolder; Tallien, Bourdon (de l'Oise), Carrier, Fouché, Fréron, Barras, Rovère, and nearly all the members of the Committee of General Safety, were continually on the alert, and engaged the lowest scoundrels to agitate the population against Robespierre.

When Paris became discontented at the increasing number of death-sentences, the servants of the conspirators were heard to say: "It is Robespierre who wills it! Who can alter it!"

For all that happened he was held responsible. To those who had friends amongst the former nobility they asserted: "It was he who would have had your lives." To the fiery patriots in the streets: "He protects the aristocrats!" To the priests: "He alone persecutes you." Everywhere these slaves of his enemies were to be found; even at the sittings of the Tribunal and near the prisons they would often be heard to exclaim: "Look at those unhappy

[1] Ch. d'Héricault, *La Révolution de Thermidor* (1878), p. 267.

prisoners! Who is the cause of all this? Robespierre!"

There was a strong desire to rule in the government of the Republic in common, and to throw the cause of all that happened on one man alone.

Owing, however, to his exceptional popularity with the people, and his numerous friends in the midst of the Jacobins, he was still dreaded.

At the evening sitting of the Jacobins on June 11th, the day after Saint-Just's return, Robespierre made his complaints known. He desired to throw light on the situation at that moment: "When crime breeds in the shadow of the ruins of liberty, are there then, for free men, other means stronger than truth and publicity?"[1]

He did not wish to attack the enemies of the Revolution with any other weapon than public opinion and the support of honest citizens; then showed more clearly whom he considered as enemies to the Republic, and seemed to point at the Committee of General Safety and some members of the Convention, by saying:

"You would tremble were I to tell you from what quarter I am accused of aiming at the dictatorship, and of oppressing the Convention. The atrocities which are credited against us did not seem revolting to men who had assumed a new and sacred character, and even among our colleagues there are some who are guilty of them."

His enemies had of course not omitted to point out that the law of June 10th was only made with the object of sending members of the Convention to the

[1] *Moniteur du* 13 *Messidor*, an II. (July 1st, 1794).

guillotine, and Robespierre knew that this idea was fairly general, also that he had given cause for it. Continuing his speech that evening, he declared that he would not remain silent, even at the risk of his reputation and his life, at which somebody shouted from the gallery : " Robespierre, all Frenchmen are on your side." To this he replied: " Truth is my only harbour from crime. I want neither partisans nor praises. My defence is in my conscience." [1]

His words were enthusiastically applauded by the Jacobins. He could still count on the majority in the Convention and the Committee. In the latter, however, it was beginning to be felt that the triumvirate—Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon—had too much authority, and for that reason it was probably decided on July 3rd to send Couthon to the Southern army ; and on the 7th the Committee insisted that he should leave La Rochelle, armed with the fullest power. Couthon was prepared to go, but suddenly decided to remain, as something of importance had occurred.

[1] *Moniteur du* 13 *Messidor*, an II. (July 1st, 1794).

XIX

RUPTURE IN THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

COUTHON refused to leave his friends, for the Committee was dealing with some important and critical matters.

The position of the trio—Couthon, Saint-Just, and Robespierre—had become very strong. The speech of the latter in the Jacobin Club on July 1st had made several of their enemies tremble, and of this, various instances have become known. Many really believed that Robespierre had drawn up lists with the names of deputies who were to be committed before the Tribunal, but in reality he did nothing of the kind.[1] Firstly the names of twelve were mentioned, then of eighteen, afterwards of thirty even, and many members of the Convention were growing very uneasy. Some dared not sleep at their houses; others fell ill from fright.

Bourdon de l'Oise behaved the most cowardly of all, as is plain from the writings of his friend, Berryer.[2] In his *Souvenirs* Berryer has related that Bourdon lived at that time in small quarters in the rue de Saints Pères, a house without a "portier," but with a little

[1] Even Courtois—*Papiers trouvés chez Robespierre* (24 Thermidor)—dared not maintain this.

[2] *Souvenirs de M. Berryer*, I., p. 227.

back door instead, from which it was easy to escape. He had been invited to a simple luncheon with his friend, but had hardly entered the dwelling when Bourdon said to him: "Listen!—Robespierre is my personal enemy; . . . he has attacked and threatened me openly in the sitting of the Convention; . . . he wishes for my death, that he may more completely dominate the assembly and more easily seize the supreme power. I am determined to prevent these ambitious designs, and intend to kill him with my own hands."

Hereupon—Berryer continued—he drew a box from underneath the bed, and produced the coat worn by him at the taking of the Bastille, the plumes which had adorned his hat in the Vendée, and also a kind of long butcher's knife, his weapon during that struggle. He remarked to his friend that his coat was still stained with blood, and that his plumes had been pierced by bullets; as for the knife, he assured him that it had struck many a time into the hearts of his enemies. With this weapon he would kill Robespierre on the very first opportunity. Nothing happened, however, on this first opportunity; he did not go further than this bragging.

As many, even in the Committee, did not think themselves safe, it was decided to ask Robespierre in the joint meeting of the two Committees what griefs he had against his colleagues.

But another question had first to be dealt with. An important trial was pending, known as, "la Conspiration des Prisons." Many prisoners—the prisons were at that time filled with thousands upon thousands

—wrote to the Committee of Public Safety that plots were being hatched in secret, and in letters from Valagnos and Grenier, two prisoners in the gaol at Bicêtre, the whole affair was revealed. Robespierre wrote on their communications, "*renvoié à Herman*," just as he used to write on others, "*renvoié à Carnot*," ". . . *à Barère*," etc. This was all the part he took in the case of la Conspiration des Prisons, although many historians have held him responsible for the trial and its issue.

The documents[1] relative to this affair were sent to the Committee, and he received them personally in the beginning of Messidor, when he was superintending the Bureau de la Police Générale, in the place of Saint-Just, who was still absent from Paris.

Robespierre thought it necessary that Herman—one of the Presidents of the Tribunal—should at least inquire into the charge, and on June 25th this was taken in hand.

The suspects were pointed out, and Saint-Just on his return placed his signature under several orders of the Committee to bring them before the Tribunal; and some of his colleagues signed with him, while Robespierre only signed one of these writs on July 5th (17 Messidor). A hundred and fifty-eight prisoners of every rank and age were accused of trying to escape from the Luxembourg prison, and of attempts on the lives of members of the Convention and the Committee. The zeal of Herman, however, went much too far, but that was no reason to hold Robespierre responsible for the actions of another. There existed no personal

[1] Found by Ernest Hamel in the *Archives of the State*.

friendship between these two men, and moreover, Herman was even prepared to execute the decrees of the Convention against the friends of Robespierre. On July 27th the second president of the Tribunal, Dumas, wished to have all the hundred and fifty-eight victims despatched in one day ; but Fouquier-Tinville, the public prosecutor, did not fall in with his project.

Between this man and Robespierre existed a covert antipathy. Fouquier often dined with Laurent Lecointre at Versailles, and with Merlin de Thionville, both of them opponents of Robespierre ; and it is a fact that Fouquier spoke to Martel—a member of the Convention—in hostile terms about Robespierre, and proposed to him that they should combine in saving their lives.[1]

Moreover, he was on very good terms with Amas, Vadier, Voulland, and Jagot, members of the Committee of General Safety, all of them enemies of Robespierre.

Fouquier wrote to the Committee on July 6th, asking for orders with regard to the hundred and fifty-eight accused, but, not receiving a reply, he went at ten o'clock at night to the Pavillon Egalité in the Tuileries, where he encountered Barère in the anteroom, apparently giving audience to a variety of people. When he was admitted to the Committee-room, he found there Collot d'Herbois, Billaud-Varenne, Saint-Just, Robespierre, and Carnot. The public prosecutor spoke of his letter, but was told that this had not been received, upon which he asked for instructions. Saint-Just thought that it would not

[1] *Memoires de Fouquier* in *L'histoire parlementaire*, vol. xxxiv., p. 247.

be right to guillotine all the prisoners at the same time, in case they were sentenced to death, but Fouquier reminded him of the letter of the law which ordered the execution to take place twenty-four hours after the verdict had been pronounced.

According to Fouquier, one of the members replied that an execution of a hundred and fifty-eight at one time "might appear a butchery, and this would be demoralising the guillotine." It was then decided to take them to the scaffold in three lots, on the 7th, 9th, and 10th of July.

It is certainly surprising that the members of the Convention—among them Saint-Just and Robespierre did not demur against such a decision; but the stormy events which had previously taken place had hardened their hearts and had excited their fanatical zeal for Revolutionary ideas to an excessively high degree. What atrocities had not already been committed? What gruesome scenes had they not witnessed?

The heads of Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, and Madame Elisabeth, had fallen on the scaffold; the noble and virtuous Princess de Lamballe, their devoted friend, had been brutally murdered, her body dragged through the streets at the end of a pike, her head stuck on a pike after the hair had been dressed by a barber; thousands had been executed after one or two inquiries at the Revolutionary Tribunal of Justice, which had been established within the prison walls during September 1792.

The educated and well-to-do classes of the Republicans had severely suffered; and how could they arrest the advance of the

been set to work, and it was not easy to predict when it would be brought to rest.

After Fouquier had received his orders, a joint meeting of the Committees was held during the night of July 6th. Robespierre was to bring forward his accusations, and an effort at pacification of the two governing bodies would be made. He demanded the punishment of the conspirators whose schemes had been partly discovered by the spies of the police, and he drew attention to the scandalous conduct of the members of the Convention who, as Commissioners in the Departments, had dishonoured the Republic: Fouché, Fréron, Barras, Carrier, Dubois-Crancé, and Tallien. The Committee of General Safety showed itself hostile, and would hear nothing of this charge, while the Committee of Public Safety did not seem in any hurry to deal with it. A violent discussion arose between Saint-Just and Vadier, and afterwards between Carnot and Saint-Just. Carnot had ably administered the War Department at a time when France was at war with all Europe, and had gained victory after victory. Saint-Just had distinguished himself on the battle-field as the conqueror of Fleurus, and had taken Charleroi. Sooner or later these two men were certain to come into collision. Saint-Just had called Carnot an aristocrat, and Barère defended him in his own cautious way. Hereupon Robespierre and Saint-Just left the meeting, after stating their intention of appealing to public opinion, which would certainly not suffer the Committees to protect the enemies of the Republic.[1]

The die was cast.

[1] Barère, *Mémoires*, vol. ii., p. 203.

XX

TWO EVENINGS WITH THE JACOBINS

ROBESPIERRE, Saint-Just, and Couthon hoped that the Jacobin Club, at least, would support them against their antagonists in both Committees. It was in the rue Saint-Honoré that the Jacobins met, where they had appropriated a small chapel, formerly used by the Jacobin brotherhood.

At the street entrance was a gate or porch, over which the national tricolour was waving. This led to a small courtyard, in which rose a very small little church, with a miniature clock-tower.

In front of this chapel, which was built in the shape of a large barn, a poplar had been planted as the "tree of liberty," which did not seem to have found fertile ground, for it was in anything but a flourishing condition on July 9th, 1794.

Above the church entrance was a marble slab, on which was to be read in large letters

SOCIETE DES JACOBINS.

UNITÉ, LIBERTÉ, EGALITÉ, INDIVISIBILITÉ
DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE.

FRATERNITÉ OU LA MORT.

Above the board hung the red flag, and over this the red cap.

Inside the chapel, the white walls had been entirely bared of church ornaments; the ceiling was formed by a barrel-shaped roof, provided with many windows, which admitted abundant light to the hall. In the middle of the building stood two large cylinder-shaped stoves, from which narrow iron pipes rose to the roof, and by means of an elbow found a way out through two of the windows. Against one of the side walls a platform had been erected, on which stood the committee table and the chairman's seat. From the top of a book-case, behind this chair, appeared the bust of Mirabeau.

The other side-wall was partly adorned with a tablet, on which "La Declaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen" was painted in large letters; and here stood the speakers' tribune, facing the platform just described.

At the south side of the chapel, opposite the entrance, a wooden gallery had been constructed for the use of the public; the members of the club occupied ordinary wooden forms rising along the walls.

This was the place of meeting for the Jacobins, who, since the taking of the Bastille, and especially after the Convention was called (August 10th, 1792), had proclaimed themselves as the true defenders of the chief Revolutionary principles, in opposition to the Girondins.

Since the rupture in the Committee of Public Safety, Robespierre had decided, with his friends, to appeal to the general opinion at the meeting of the Jacobin Club. Until then, he was always looked upon as the

THE JUSSERS CLUB

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most influential man in the Committee, and had never stated in public that he was at enmity with some of his colleagues. It has been proved, however, from remarks made by some of his friends, that to them, at least, he expressed his annoyance against a few members of the Committee.

In a letter written by an unknown citizen of Lyons (July 8th), the writer intimated that he had heard with pleasure of Robespierre's antipathy to Collot d'Herbois, the butcher of Lyons, stating: "Robespierre detests Collot, hardly looks at him in the Committee, and only tolerates him there out of consideration for the powerful party which Collot has managed to form for himself in Paris." [1]

A little earlier, July 3rd, Robespierre's friend, Deschamps, had remarked at Boulogne-sur-mer to Quignon—a notable citizen of that place: "Carnot is a wretched scoundrel who remains purposely all night on the Committee, in order to open all missives as they arrive, and who nearly made things go wrong in Charleroi. Légendre is stupid. Tallien is a scoundrel. Bourdon is not much better. . . ." [2]

On July 7th the Jacobins had elected the selfish and slippery Barère as their chairman. Some even thought that this would be agreeable to Robespierre, who knew well enough that it was an artifice on the part of Fouché. Barère was a bon-vivant, *qui mangeait à tous les râteliers*, who was known to take part in all

[1] Saladin, *Rapport de la Commission de Vingt-et-un.* (After Thermidor, pp. 223-4.)

[2] *Archives nationales*, *F.* 7, 4433. Quoted by Ch. d'Héricault, *Revue de Thermidor.*

kinds of orgies at Clichy with the financial men of the Terreur, at which erotic amusements were not wanting.

Robespierre referred in the evening meeting of the Jacobins (July 9th) to the turn of affairs, and protested against the abuses committed by some magistrates. One of the sections had notified that every citizen who was intoxicated on national holidays should be sent to prison. Consequently many harmless workmen and good citizens had been imprisoned, and in danger of their lives.

Robespierre charged the Revolutionary Committee of that section with having punished the good whilst leaving scoundrels at liberty. This was the very thing they should have guarded against: "If the public functionaries had only reflected, they would have found but few culprits to punish, because the people are good, and the wicked form but a very small class."[1] This confirms what Robespierre's words so often convey—namely, that, as a statesman, he allowed himself to be led away by ethical instead of purely political maxims. That evening he distinctly indicated his enemies in the Convention and Committee, and exclaimed, amidst the loud applause of his audience: "These base conspirators must either renounce their infamous machinations or take our lives."[2]

At the conclusion of his speech he added:

"As long as the members of the Convention are restrained by awe and terror, they will remain incapable of discharging their glorious mission. Oh! that they would exert themselves for eternal justice, that they

[1] Ernest Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 622.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 623.

would baffle the infamous plots by their vigilance! Then, the fruits of our victories would be: liberty, peace and happiness. Then, our brethren, who are risking their lives for the sake of the country, would be assured that their families would enjoy the immortal privileges which their generous self-sacrifice had procured!"

Two days later, July 11th, 1794, Robespierre again ascended the speakers' tribune at the Jacobin Club. Barère intended to speak that evening about the victories of the French armies, but an address of Commune-Affranchie (Lyons) at first gave rise to a discussion on the atrocities committed by Collot d'Herbois, Fouché, and Dubois-Crancé in that city, and Robespierre attacked Fouché: "Is not the man who has persecuted the patriots of Commune-Affranchie, with a perfidy cowardly as well as cruel, the same as he who at this moment is the soul of a plot hatched against the best patriots in the Convention?"

But, he maintained, "the Committee of Public Safety will know how to prevent this."

So he hoped at the moment, but was very soon to be disillusioned.

At the conclusion of his speech he said: "We demand, lastly, that justice and virtue shall be triumphant, innocence left in peace, the people victorious over all their enemies, and that the Convention shall be above all the intrigues!"

"There are scoundrels in the Convention!" cried the doctor Saintex, one of the Jacobins.

"They ought to be driven out," replied the judge

Naulin.[1] Couthon demanded that the name of Dubois-Crancé should be struck from the list of members of the club; Robespierre proposed that Fouché should be ordered to defend himself against the accusations made that evening.

Augustin stated that all kinds of flattery had been tried on him to separate him from his brother, and exclaimed, in a voice trembling with emotion:

"Je n'ambitionne que la gloire d'avoir le même tombeau que lui."

Couthon's voice was heard above every one: "Je veux partager les poignards de Robespierre."

And all joined in this wish.

Barère had not been able to deliver his speech that evening, and went away greatly disappointed. On arriving at home, accompanied by the juror Villate, he threw himself down on a fauteuil, sighing: "I am sick of these men. . . . I wish I had a pistol!"

Villate asked him why Robespierre had not given him a chance to speak that evening, to which he replied: "Robespierre is insatiable! Because we do not do what he wants, he attacks the members of the Committee. I should have nothing to say if he were hostile to men like Thuriot, Guffray, Rovère, Lecointre and Panis, or even to Tallien, Bourdon de l'Oise, Légendre, and Fréron. But what can he have against Duval, against Andouin, Léonard Bourdon, or Vadier?"[2] It is not certain whether Villate was quite honest in making this statement, but Barère distinctly mentioned some of these names.

[1] *Moniteur* 26 *Messidor*.

[2] Villate, *Causes secrètes de la Révolution de Thermidor*, pp. 39, 40.

XXI

THE LAST DAYS OF MESSIDOR AN II

FOUCHE had to defend himself on July 14th (26 Messidor) at the meeting of the Jacobins; he did not put in an appearance, however, but sent a letter instead, in which he stated, that he would be prepared to defend his actions as soon as the two Committees had issued their report on his private and public life.

Robespierre, referring to the cowardice of his conduct, exclaimed: "Is he afraid, then, that his hideous face will reflect his crimes too plainly?"

Fouché, the ringleader of the conspiracy against the triumvirate Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just, was certainly not of prepossessing appearance. Thiers spoke of his "pale, false, cross-eyed face,"[1] whilst the celebrated statesman, Dupont de l'Eure, expressed his opinion in a still more forcible tone: "I never saw such a hideous rogue!"

After Robespierre had called him "a base and contemptible impostor!" Fouché's name was struck from the list of members of the Jacobin Club. But this did not discourage Fouché; on the contrary, it appears, from some letters of his, found in the State

[1] *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire.*

archives,[1] that it spurred him on all the more to bring his designs against Robespierre to a successful issue.

Those letters had been written to his sister in Nantes, who, imprudently enough, communicated the contents to Dr. Bô, the commissioner of the Convention in that town.

Fouché wrote: "I have nothing to fear from the slander of Maximilien Robespierre. . . . Within a short time you will hear the issue of this incident. . . ."

Some days later he added: "My business has become that of all patriots. . . . Only a few days more and the rogues, the scoundrels, will be exposed. To-day perhaps we may see the traitors unmasked." The commissioner Bô sent these letters—written on the 20th, 22nd, and 23rd of July—by an aide-de-camp to the Committee of Public Safety, but they arrived too late.

During the last days of Messidor, the position of the Republic was a peculiar one; it seemed on the surface as if its future were assured.

The Republican armies were everywhere victorious; the Civil War in the Departments was practically over; the rebellious towns, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Lyons, and Toulon, had been punished and brought back to obedience; the rising in the Vendée was almost suppressed.

Toulon had been recaptured and the English driven out, thanks to the abilities of General Dugommier, Major Napoleon Buonaparte, and Augustin Robespierre, deputy of the Convention in the field. In the South, the Spaniards had been driven from the frontier;

[1] By Ernest Hamel.

in the North, Dunkirk and Maubeuge had been conquered, Charleroi taken by Saint-Just, and the Austrians and Dutch turned out of Belgium; whilst in the East, the triumphant armies of the Republic had entered the Palatinate.

All this witnessed to the extraordinary energy and zeal of the Committee of Public Safety, especially of Carnot, who had organised fourteen armies under extremely difficult circumstances, and provisioned them during a time of scarcity and famine.

At the same time, through the exertions and ability of Jean-Bon-Saint-André, another member of the Committee, the French Fleet had been enabled to vie with the British.

In Paris itself the position seemed less favourable. The number of prisoners in the whole of France amounted to 400,000, according to the lists of the Committee of General Safety.[1] From the report of the clerk of the Revolutionary Tribunal in Paris, it appeared that this court had pronounced 505 death-sentences from April 3rd, 1793—the date of its institution—to April 2nd, 1794, against 2,158, from the latter date to July 30th, 1794; and for this reason the last four months were called "la grande Terreur."

The arrests increased continually as a result of the law of June 10th (22 Prairial an II.). On that day the 28 prisons in Paris contained 7,320 suspects, and notwithstanding the large number of death-sentences there were no less than 7,800 prisoners on July 27th.

It was said that Robespierre withdrew towards the middle of June (1794), and did not exercise any great

[1] Beaulieu, *Essai historique* 1803, V., p. 253.

influence on the discussions in the Committee, and his supporters—especially his accurate biographer, Ernest Hamel—have made use of this fact, to acquit him of all responsibility in la grande Terreur. But we have already shown that he had not entirely withdrawn, in spite of his own statement on July 26th (8 Thermidor): "I was obliged absolutely to renounce my duties as member of the Committee of Public Safety."

He did not altogether cease to occupy himself with public affairs; for have we not seen that he took charge of the Bureau de la Police générale for Saint-Just until June 30th, and also that he signed several resolutions of the Committee on that date? But from this it must not be inferred that he was present at the debates of the Committee. He went to the hall in the Tuileries at five o'clock in the afternoon, and then, in the absence of all the members, signed the resolutions of which he approved,[1] while probably the secretaries of the Committee, Lejeune and Pierre, availed themselves of his presence to solicit his signature for other documents.

Robespierre had certainly some right to declare that he had renounced his functions as member, for after the joint meeting of the two Committees on July 6th, when his proposals were rejected, he declined to be present at the discussions. He possessed two faithful allies in Saint-Just and Couthon, who informed him accurately of the doings in the Committee of Public Safety; while his two friends, Le Bas—the husband of his Eléonore's sister—and David—the

[1] Ch. d'Héricault, *La Révolution de Thermidor*, 1878, p. 298.

celebrated painter of ancient subjects—both members of the Committee of General Safety, kept him well posted upon all that happened there. Therefore, although Robespierre was absent from the sittings after July 6th, he was closely acquainted with all that was going on. But if he was, to a certain extent, less answerable for the Government measures from July 6th to July 27th, he was certainly a guilty party to the blood-law of June 10th.

His name was repeatedly abused on account of his great celebrity; the prisoners thought that it was Robespierre who tortured them; the turnkeys threatened with his name, the Jacobins were ironically called "the livery servants of Robespierre"; the foreign enemies spoke of "the soldiers of Robespierre"; and later historians called the Reign of Terror "the *régime* of Robespierre." He himself lamented the course of events, although largely the fruit of his own labour, and said on July 26th: "Everywhere deeds of oppression have been multiplied, so as to extend the rule of terror and calumny; . . . destructive financial laws are threatening all the smaller capitalists, and carry despair into a large number of families who are attached to the Revolution."

He found himself somewhat in the position of Thiers in February 1848, when declining the offer of Louis-Philippe to form a ministry, to whom the Queen said bitterly: "Monsieur Thiers, vous avez allumé le feu et vous ne savez pas à l'éteindre."

Robespierre had been from the outset too much a man of theory. His admiration of Rousseau, his belief in his ideas, had led him into all kinds of illusions

about a happy state which would be established by him. He thought to be at the head of all good and virtuous people, and wished to make every culprit tremble. His followers who supported him in the Jacobin Club belonged mainly to the lower middle classes ; the crowds who applauded his speeches in the Convention consisted principally of slovenly women from the back streets and disreputable characters,[1] and Robespierre regarded all this rabble as *le peuple vertueux*. No doubt he was a great orator and a gifted lawyer, but he was largely wanting in practical common-sense.

[1] Taine, *La Conquête Jacobine* (1881), II., p. 405.

XXII

ROBESPIERRE AND THE JACOBINS

UNTIL the last hour of his life Robespierre relied on the Jacobins; he knew the great strength of this club, and was certainly justified in this confidence. Their influence on the events from 1789 to 1795 was exceptionally great, and we will pause here to take a brief survey of this.

The club of the Jacobins had already been founded before the Revolution. When the deputies of the Third Estate were called to Versailles in May 1789, a society was formed by some of them at that place under the name of "Les Amis de la Constitution."

When Louis XVI. was forced by the mob to leave Versailles for Paris, the society also removed to the capital, and took up its quarters in the rue Saint-Honoré, in the small chapel and library belonging to the old convent of the Jacobins. From that moment the society was christened "Club des Jacobins."

At the outset it possessed about three hundred highly respectable members, mostly deputies and well-known men such as Condorcet, Marie Joseph Chenier, the painter David, and the actor Talma. To be elected it was necessary to be proposed by ten members and to obtain a majority of votes. The public could not

attend the meetings unless provided with a personal ticket of admission.

According to the statutes, the object of the club was: to discuss beforehand all questions which were to be decided by the national assembly, and to correspond with similar societies which might afterwards be formed in the kingdom. It soon appeared that the rest of France would follow the example of Paris. After the Fête de la Fédération (July 14th, 1790), when representatives of all the departments flocked to the capital, Jacobin clubs were established everywhere.

In August 1791 four hundred of these were in existence, and in September 1792 about twelve hundred, just as many as there were towns and villages in France. The clubs in the provinces followed the example of the mother society in Paris. They consulted the Parisian Jacobins, who gave them the watchword in political matters.

All communications from the departments were carefully considered in the rue Saint-Honoré, where every evening the members met, to discuss the elections for the Commune, for the departmental Council, and for the various legislative assemblies; to deal with the correspondence of the sister clubs, and to consider the events of the day.

During the morning the club sat for working-men and others, to whom the Constitution of September 14th, 1791, was explained. This Constitution was the work of the Constituent Assembly, and had been solemnly accepted by Louis XVI., after he had made himself almost entirely impossible as king, by his

flight and arrest at Varennes. Whence, however, this enormous power of the Jacobins? Firstly, because they formed a semi-official government, sometimes much more influential than the executive itself. Secondly, they professed an all-powerful dogma, the doctrine of the people's sovereignty, according to the definition of Rousseau.

Robespierre believed in this doctrine with all his soul; *la majesté nationale* was dear above everything to him, to his friends, to every Jacobin, to every Frenchman who had applauded the Revolution.

The rebellion of the people was justified in all eyes, as the great sovereignty of the people was revealed by it. For the punishment of its enemies the Tribunal was established and the guillotine erected.

As the franchise had been given to the people, the electors, consistently with the Jacobin theory, looked on their representatives as servants, who could be dismissed at any moment, and who could decide on nothing against the wish of the sovereign people.

The question of how this theory must be practically applied concerned the Jacobins little enough.

This doctrine of sovereignty was the only thing that occupied their empty heads; they talked about it in hollow phrases, which were always greeted with just as hollow applause. And when a clever and eloquent lawyer, like Robespierre, spoke, in his charming, delightful way, of matters in which they all believed, their enthusiasm became boundless; he inspired his band of followers with the same burning zeal which once fired the disciples of John Knox and Calvin.

confined to the following hypotheses: Religion is superstition, monarchy is an usurpation, priests are impostors, aristocrats are vampires, all kings are tyrants and monsters.

Robespierre had repeatedly developed these fundamental truths, with his fascinating eloquence, from the fulness of his conviction.

They idolised him and made him the most popular man in France. Was it a wonder, then, that he relied on them in the hour of danger?

XXIII

OTHER ALLIES OF ROBESPIERRE

IT is hardly necessary to repeat here that the Jacobins were the real rulers during the period of "la grande Terreur." At the elections for the municipal council, their candidates had been sent to the Hôtel-de-Ville. The forty-eight sections of Paris were almost exclusively in their hands, and this alone represented a very great force.

Every section was self-governing, with its own Revolutionary Committee, of which the most zealous partisans of the Jacobins became members. Every committee had a special building, where sittings were held, and this was always protected by national guards; at the least disturbance the drums were sounded, and the citizens, armed with guns, hastened to the committee-hall. All the men of a section formed battalions of national guards, which were continually called out by their commanders, generally distinguished members of the Revolutionary Committee. At the public meetings of these committees, all voters of the section had the right to be present, and Danton was responsible for "the law of forty sous," by which every citizen who chose could claim forty sols (two francs) as an attendance-fee. The sovereign people learnt thus to

know their power, and accustomed themselves to leave their ordinary work and attend exclusively to the so-called State business. And the committees succeeded in passing all kinds of foolish and absurd resolutions, because "His Majesty the people" defended these against a better-informed minority. If a citizen were bold enough to oppose a motion which pleased the majority, he would soon be silenced by a shower of such scornful epithets as suspect, aristocrat, moderate, federalist, and he would certainly expose himself to the danger of immediate arrest.

The Revolutionary Committees had the right to levy taxes on the inhabitants of the sections under their administration, and these, in addition to the heavy municipal taxation, often became almost unbearable. Some committees proposed to build or renovate public halls, to print and distribute speeches, all at the expense of their sections, while others distinguished themselves by more violent measures.

Amongst the most renowned was the 5th—"la Section des Piques"—from the church de la Madeleine to the Chaussée d'Antin, with the rue des Porcherons as its northern border. Further, the 33rd, the "Section de la Indivisibilité," bounded on the south by the rue St.-Antoine, and on the west by the rue du Temple, which comprised the quarter round the Bastille. It has already been stated that some members of the committee in this section had been apprehended on the charge brought by its own president, and that a Hébertist spirit ruled amongst them.

Further we have the 43rd, the "Section de Mutius Scævola," which contained the Luxembourg Palace,

with its extensive gardens; many convents and monasteries,—in particular that of "les Carmes déchaussés," at that time a notorious prison; also the aristocratic residences of Toulouse, Croy, Beaune, and la Guiche.[1]

But the nobility had left their mansions, and were scattered abroad, while monks and nuns had for the most part fled from their retreats, which were now in the hands of sectional governments and political clubs.

During the latter half of July, Paris presented a very sombre spectacle. Most of the streets looked empty and deserted, although in certain parts of the town there was unwonted activity, especially in those streets and squares where the Jacobins, "the sectionaries of 2 francs," the men of the Commune, and the tricoteuses of the tribunes, were wont to assemble.

The busiest spots were the gardens of the Tuileries and the Terrasse des Feuillants—to the north of these gardens—where most of the *cafés* were to be found; further, the vicinity of the Palais National, where the masses assembled to attend the sittings of the assembly; and the entrances of the Pavillon Egalité—one of the southern wings of the Tuileries—where the Committee of Public Safety met.

Those foreigners and Muscadins who had remained behind in Paris during the Grande Terreur met in the garden of the Palais Royal (Maison Egalité). Besides, there was always some traffic in the rue Saint-Honoré, where Robespierre lived with the

[1] *Nouveau plan de Paris avec ses Principaux Edifices et Nouvelles Barrières,—par M. Pichon,—Ingénieur-Géographe à Paris, avec privilège du Roy. Année* 1789: 3rd page.

Duplays, and where the Jacobin Club was situated; in the vicinity of the prisons; in front of the Palais de Justice; before the buildings belonging to the Revolutionary Committees; near the town-hall; round the numerous guards; and at the barriers.

The sectional meetings and the Revolutionary Committees were almost entirely composed of Jacobins, who were occasionally inclined to Hébertist excesses. The engravings of that period show us the interior of the assembly-rooms, which, as they had to contain crowds of male and female listeners, were necessarily large.

The members of the council, who spent the greater part of the day there, were seated at a long, narrow, green table. The busts of Brutus and Marat stood on brackets on the wall; from the ceiling hung a spear with a red cap at the end, and a tablet, on which was the name of the section, with the usual addition: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death. Two other tablets hung on the wall, on which were painted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen; and in a corner, near the green table, was a kind of stand, covered with bottles and refreshments provided at the expense of the citizens, in which the committee members took a very proper interest.

Nearly all of them had red caps, with national cockades, while some wore the carmagnole (a waistcoat with sleeves) and long, bright-coloured trousers, often of red, white and blue material. Many smoked short pipes, and carried pistols in their leathern belts; some were armed with spears, others with long, clanking swords.

A REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE.

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They sat there to have the citizens brought before them and inquire whether they were not suspected of some offence or other, and if they were in possession of a "*certificat de civisme.*"[1]

The system of espionage was employed to find out these suspected citizens. The Committee of Public Safety came first, with a large number of spies, whose names and reports have been preserved in the State archives. Many of these reports were published, and contained all kinds of personal accusations.

As a single example, we will take that of the spy Rousseville, whose beat was in the suburbs of Paris, and who, as "observateur de l'esprit public," sent daily reports to the Committee. On May 22nd, 1793, he wrote about the inhabitants of Bercy, and stated: "Blot, grocer, has misbehaved himself on August 10th. The Mayor of Bercy is a traitor; has an income of thirty thousand livres; holds unpatriotic discourse. Michel, formerly coachman of Antoinette, is still general manager of the waggon manufactories established at Bercy."[2]

The sovereign French people had obtained through this state of affairs no other freedom than that of watching, accusing, and betraying one another. Those who could shout loudest in clubs and committees were generally best off. All the street-criers, the Jacobins, and the mob, who attended the sittings of the Revolutionary Committee, tried to vie with each

[1] See engraving: "Intérieur d'un Comité Révolutionnaire estampe du tempo" in Daubant's *Paris en 1794 et en 1795*, page 312. (Paris, 1869.)

[2] Daubant's *Paris en 1794 et en 1795*, p. 374.

other in their enthusiasm for Robespierre, whose name was always mentioned with an adjective: the "*vertueux* Maximilien," the "great Incorruptible."

This exceptional popularity kept him on his feet during July 1794. Although many of his enemies were impatient in the interests of their friends or families, they dared not attack him; besides, the law of June 10th was sending more and more victims to the scaffold. The excitement increased daily; Robespierre himself saw the danger of the position, but relied on the triumph of the Jacobin policy, for the club was still supported by the majority in the Convention. But he was soon to discover how fatally he had deceived himself.

XXIV

PARIS ON 1 THERMIDOR AN II

(July 18th, 1794)

THERE is something unintelligible in the events of 8, 9, and 10 Thermidor.

Robespierre was the much-lauded favourite of the Revolutionary groups, the Jacobins, the Commune, the forty-eight sections, and the majority in the Convention, although his influence in this assembly continually grew weaker, in consequence of the successful and secret plotting of his opponents, led by Tallien and Fouché.

Robespierre understood that the law of June 10th would have to be altered, but he did not go so far as to make a proposal to this effect in the Committee of Public Safety, as he had withdrawn on July 6th. On that day, his protests against the shameless outrages committed in the departments by Fouché, Fréron, Barras, Carrier, Dubois-Crancé, and Tallien, had been totally ignored.

It has been observed that his enemies hesitated, month after month, to attack him. Thérézia Cabarrus had been languishing for two months in the terrible prison la Force.

Robespierre seemed unassailable; and yet, a single

gust of the Revolutionary storm-wind overthrew him and all his friends.

To explain this strange phenomenon, it is necessary to examine the various classes of which the Parisian population was composed, and to inquire what influence was uppermost in the various circles.

In the first place, it must be considered that at that time the Parisians possessed to a high degree the peculiar characteristics of the French nation, such as inconstancy, credulity, ignorance, frivolity, and fickleness; on the other hand, they distinguished themselves by diligence, good taste, order, and skill. The greater part of the population was extremely ignorant, as the state of primary education, even at that time, left much to be desired.[1]

The people were very easily led, believed all kinds of accusations, and were always craving for novelties; at the least ill-fortune there was at once talk of treason and traitors; its heroes were idolized at one moment and dragged through the dirt the next.

Through the influence of Paris, the course of the French Revolution was greatly changed.

The principles of 1789 and 1790 had undergone many alterations since the national assembly left Versailles for Paris, owing to the fact that the king and queen had been forced to leave their residence there for the Tuileries.

The various national assemblies—the Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, and the Convention—came in contact with the Parisian populace,

[1] Prof. Dr. Adolf Schmidt, *Pariser Zustände während der Revolutionszeit von* 1789—1800, vol. iii., pp. 333-81 (1876).

which filled the tribunes, and interrupted and interfered with the debates.

A business people like those of the United States chose as their government centre a quiet place like Washington, and never thought of selecting an enormous city like New York for the seat of their legislative assembly.

In 1793 Paris had 600,000 inhabitants, of which 160,000 were voters, and 150,000 national guards; but during the Reign of Terror, the population decreased, owing to war and the guillotine. One curious trait of the Parisians, arising from the Jacobin doctrine of the people's sovereignty, was their belief that, in a narrow sense, they held the whole supreme power in trust, and that they were capable of ruling all the eighty-two departments. Mercier, who lived during the Terror, expressed this in his Tableau de Paris, by saying: "The Universe is situated on the banks of the Seine."

In their inconstancy they were continually in want of new leaders: Mirabeau, Roland, Marat, Vergniaud, Hébert, Chaumette, Danton, and Robespierre, followed each other in rapid succession. But by no means the entire population took part in the affairs of the day. A comparatively small minority of agitators drew the majority with them.

Mercier says, quite rightly: "The people of Paris were puppets in the hands of some mountebanks."

The greater number of the population were fairly well-to-do, while a sixth part, a hundred thousand or thereabouts, could even be called rich. In 1794, only about thirty thousand could be considered as actually

without means, of whom about nine thousand were men,[1] and amongst these were found the crowds, who took part in everything connected with political life —in the tribunes, streets, squares, and other centres of traffic. They could only gain by these momentous events, and therefore tried to turn them to their own advantage.

With them were some thousands from all the other classes of the Parisian community, who believed from conviction in the principles of the Revolution.

They were the members of the Convention, the Commune, and of the forty-eight governments of the sections; but all these did not amount to a tenth of the entire population.

The large majority were moderate, fond of good order, and prepared to accept the Republic, granted that they were not royalist, if it could guarantee them a firm and uniform government.

The moderates (*modérés*) were composed of the honest men, as they called themselves, and the youth of the population.

They comprised property-owners, merchants, shopkeepers, "rentiers," well-to-do workmen, commercial clerks, financiers, and lawyers with their assistants.

All these complained of the proceedings during the Reign of Terror, and objected particularly to the assignats created by the Convention.

A very powerful element in the population was formed by the journalists, compositors, and printers of nearly three hundred printing-works in Paris, who

[1] Adolf Schmidt, *Pariser Zustände*, vol. i., p. 43.

were likewise, to a large extent, counter-Revolutionary and moderate.

It is certainly surprising that the large majority of these moderates looked on passively at all that took place. They grumbled and showed themselves dissatisfied, but did not care to state their grievances in public. The bloody deeds of June 20th, 1792, the execution of the royal family, filled them with terror; they felt the deepest sorrow when the Convention arrested about twenty-five of its own members—the group of Girondins—on May 31st and June 2nd. They possessed a large army of national guards, but they did not stir, neither did they interfere at the fall of the Dantonists, who could always rely on a large measure of their support.

The Reign of Terror had rendered the Parisians cowardly and timid.

The real leaders, who paved the way for the events in the Convention and elsewhere, were either cunning schemers, such as Fouché, Tallien, Barras, Fréron, and others, or fanatics, like the two Robespierres, Couthon, Saint-Just, Le Bas, and Fleuriot Lescot; and these two groups were now supported, now reviled, by the Revolutionary mob. To the latter belonged a large number of domestics who were dissatisfied with their masters, inferior workmen, and the ragged beggars and idlers, who expected to benefit by the Revolution. They occupied the tribunes at the Convention, Jacobin Club, Commune, and sectionary governments, and became mere loiterers out of love for the Republic, whilst their families were left to starve.

If the moderate party, who could form an army of

134,000 national guards, had wished to attack the supporters of the Revolution, who could but muster 20,000, the latter would no doubt easily have been overwhelmed. As soon as the representative of the nation—the Convention—came into collision with the municipal representative—the Commune—the issue of this struggle would rest with the moderate party.

And this was what actually took place on July 27th. Many of the forty-eight sections, which had formerly been amongst the most ardent supporters of Robespierre, suddenly took the part of the Convention. The moderate party had made itself felt.

XXV

CENTRES OF TRAFFIC

PARIS did not present so gay and lively a spectacle at the end of July 1794 as formerly, in the years 1789, 1790, and 1791.

It has already been stated that the centres of social activity were chiefly in the vicinity of the Tuileries, the Palais Royal, the halls of the forty-eight sections, and in the political clubs.

The Parisians were always fond of fine clothes and fresh air, but now only a few were to be seen, in the Champs Elysées and the Jardin de Tuileries. It was in the numerous *cafés*, now more than ever the centres of social intercourse, that they met together for friendly chats and political discussions. As an immediate result of the Revolution, the number of *cafés* had continually increased, for they had become the principal rendez-vous of the Revolutionists.

Events which drove the citizens into the streets brought them indirectly to the coffee-houses, while the daily services of the national guards made them more frequent visitors now than formerly.

After the Convention had adjourned, and after the evening meeting of the Jacobins, and formerly after the sitting of the Cordeliers, the numerous *cafés* became crowded with visitors, who continued their political

discussions whilst enjoying their demi-tasses, and glasses of lemonade or beer. The visitors did not come there solely for refreshments and newspapers, but chiefly to discuss politics. They began to drop in at about eleven o'clock in the morning, but five p.m. was the time when the *cafés* were most crowded.

In 1792 and the beginning of 1793, when the Convention met in the Salle-du-Manège, numerous *cafés* sprang up near the Terrasse des Feuillants, which was situated at about the same place as a part of the present rue de Rivoli. The best known were the Café Hottot and the Café Saule.

To the former came the tricoteuses of the tribunes, disorderly, slovenly females, with dirty caps and ragged garments. The most insolent ringleaders of the mob were heard here, so that respectable citizens but seldom frequented this resort.[1]

Since 1789, the coffee-houses were also visited by women. The national guards had set the example by bringing their wives with them, and very soon the female visitors became as numerous as the men. The Café Saule was built against the outer wall of the Tuileries garden, and faced the Place du Manège. The owner, who was renowned for his Revolutionary reputation, had formerly been a mountebank, later a spectator in the public tribunes, and had afterwards become a *café* proprietor.

Always drinking and boisterous, he seemed to terrify his customers by his loud shouting and bawling.[2]

[1] *Histoire de la Société française pendant la Révolution par Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 1889, p. 164.

[2] Adolf Schmidt, *Pariser Zustände*, I., p. 135.

The Parisians, especially the moderate faction, were exceedingly timid in 1793 and 1794, and there was really some foundation for the assertion of Mercier, that a population of six hundred thousand people was held in awe by some sixty robbers.

But there was plenty of loud shouting and vociferating in the *cafés*, and violent discussions, sometimes brawls and hand-to-hand fights, were of daily occurrence.

The Café de Choiseuil was situated in what is now the boulevard des Italiens—at that time still unchristened—nearly opposite the rue Taitbout, and next to the Théâtre Italien.

Its owner, Chrétien, distinguished himself through his adoration for Robespierre.

After June 1793, the Committee of General Safety engaged the services of a crowd of common individuals, armed with stout sticks—"*les tapes durs*," as they were called—and these frequented the Café de Choiseuil, trying to pick quarrels with the supporters of Robespierre, under the pretext of being patriots *par excellence*.

The Jacobins had likewise their armed agents—*provocateurs* and *abayeurs*, as they called them—who met in certain *cafés* to decide in what locality they should form a crowd.

But during the Reign of Terror the most frequented *cafés* were those near the Palais Royal, and one of the best known among these was the Café Corazza, or the Café Italien, the favourite resort of the extreme Jacobins.

Prior to May 31st, 1793, Jacobins and Cordeliers, who worked for the fall of the Girondins, were wont to assemble there, especially Tallien, Collot d'Herbois,

and Chabot, members of the Convention, and some leaders of the sectionary governments, such as Gusman, a Spaniard, Proly, a Belgian, Varley Desfieux, and Layowski, a Pole.

Varley was an excitable young man, who dragged a kind of pulpit about with him to harangue the people in the Tuileries garden.

Desfieux and Proly were Cordeliers, and true friends of the Jacobins till the death of Hébert, on March 13th, 1794.

The friends of Hébert who accompanied him to the scaffold included the Prussian baron, Anacharsis Cloots, and the Dutch banker de Kock, whose grandson distinguished himself by writing a great many scurrilous novels, which have become the favourite literature of commercial travellers and shopgirls.

The Café Corayza was very fashionable in the early part of the day, when, between ten and two o'clock, it was visited by so-called aristocrats, distinguished Italians. In the evening they returned, and always attached themselves to whatever political party was strongest at the time.

The oldest coffee-house in the gallery was the Café de Foy, which had been the first to obtain the privilege of placing chairs in the garden; and, what is more noteworthy, it was here that Camille Desmoulins, mounted on one of the little *café* tables, agitated the mob to attack the Bastille, on July 14th, 1789.

A pavilion was soon built in the garden by the proprietor of the *café*, which was crowded all day long by Parisians and foreigners. There was an exit to the rue Richelieu for those who wished to avoid

the jostling crowds in the galleries of the Palais Royal.

The chief room in this *café* was very spacious and lofty, provided with high windows; the floor was inlaid, and the walls adorned with enormous mirrors.

The few aristocrats and secret royalists chose this place for their reunions, but often the Jacobin mob came to drive them out amidst scuffles, which frequently resulted in serious injuries to the belligerents. After the victory, the Jacobins deemed it necessary to burn gin to purify the hall. On account of these brawls, this *café* was closed for a considerable time.

Many others were found in the Palais Royal, and were always filled with an uproarious crowd, for there was a general desire to discuss the events of the day, and to arrive at definite conclusions. The brothers de Goncourt declare that the *cafés* became the vocal press of the Revolution.[1]

The citoyens and citoyennes were seated in long rows, the former often in their uniform as national guards, consisting of a blue coat with yellow *revers*, crossed by two white leathern straps, to hold cartridge-bag, and sword; the citoyennes in high plaited caps, adorned with national cockades. Most of them drank only coffee, but caused so great a confusion that the stream of passers-by in the galleries frequently stopped, in expectation of some catastrophe.

In the evening, quite a different world surged through le passage du Perron to the Palais Royal.

[1] *Histoire de la Société française pendant la Révolution par Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 1889, p. 154.

Then appeared the top hat with broad rims of the Muscadin, the large black three-cornered hat of the national guards, the red cap and dishevelled head of the sans-culotte, and the conspicuous grey felt bonnet with tricoloured plumes, worn by the priestesses of Cythera.

XXVI

CENTRES OF TRAFFIC (II)

THERMIDORIANS of more or less importance frequented the Café Corpazza in the Palais Royal, and amongst them was a somewhat mysterious Englishman, called Dobson—also called Dobsen or Dobsent by some historians.

He had no small influence as chairman of the Section de la Cité, which comprised l'Ile de la Cité, the most remarkable and oldest quarter of Paris. The western part of this island did not belong to the Section de la Cité, as this was bordered by the Pont Saint-Michel, the Boulevard du Palais, and the Pont au Change. The Boulevard du Palais of to-day was, at that time, called rue Saint-Barthélemy and rue de la Barillerie.

The eastern part of the island was interesting, and contained the old Convent of the Barnabites, the Hôtel Dieu—the oldest hospital in France, dating from the year 660, the celebrated church of Notre Dame, and the archbishop's palace. This palace was the place of assembly for the Revolutionary Committee of the section, under the presidency of Dobsent, and also that of the central committee of the forty-eight sections. The inhabitants of la Cité were exceptionally restless,

and had always held Marat and Hébert in the greatest reverence.

Ever since March 17th, 1794, when Saint-Just had brought a violent charge against the Hébertists in the Convention, resulting in the arrest and execution of their principal leaders, Paris had cursed Hébert as an agent of Pitt.

But still, amongst the citizens of la Cité many true Hébertists were lurking, and in consequence of this Dobsent was elected chairman of the Revolutionary Tribunal immediately after Robespierre's death. It is strange that Hébert betrayed himself chiefly by his own violent language in the coffee-house of his choice, the Café Procope, or the Café Zoppi, as it was then called, after its owner. This *café*, which was situated on the left bank of the Seine, in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, was renowned for the turbulence of its sans-culottish customers, who collected towards five o'clock, and, led by Hébert, deliberated with all possible vehemence and uproar. At nine o'clock in the evening a fire was made before the building, in which all the conservative and moderate newspapers were burnt.

But the spies of the two Committees reported daily upon these proceedings and the rebellious language of Hébert.

Another renowned resort in the Palais Royal was the Café du Caveau. In the large hall of this *café* were the busts of four great composers: Gluck, Sacchini, Piccini, and Grétry. Chess, draughts, and cards, were not permitted, but for all that the discussions of the Jacobins were none the less uproarious.

A little farther on was the Café Męchanique, which

owed its name to the arrangement by which the cups and glasses were sent up from below, through the hollow legs of the tables. The brothers de Goncourt tell us that the owner received a severe sword-cut in his arm for his objection to the singing of "Ça ira."

During the Reign of Terror, therefore, the Palais Royal retained all its liveliness, while Paris itself was much quieter, notwithstanding the fact that the *cafés* in the Palais were more expensive than those of the town. In the Palais Royal a cup of coffee or a small glass of brandy cost six sols, while elsewhere the prices were one and two sols less. After the English had taken possession of the French colonies, coffee became dearer still, which gave the Jacobins a pretext for making free to order only a glass of water and a newspaper.

Every *café* had its own political colour. The friends of the man who renounced his royal title and called himself Philippe Egalité met in the Café Nancy in the rue Saint-Antoine—running from the Porte-Sainte-Antoine to the Bastille. Philippe Egalité, one of the richest men in Paris, collected a number of parasites round him who, with the *viveurs* of the Cordeliers Club, Danton, Desmoulins, Cloots, de Kock, and Momoro, amused themselves with the *ci-devant* duke, and not always in an innocent way.

Hébert, who represented the most savage sans-culottism, found many of his supporters in the Café du Rendez-vous, in the Place du Carroussel, near the rue Nicaisse; this was conveniently situated in the vicinity of the Tuileries, for those who were awaiting news from the Convention.

Notwithstanding his bombastic language in his *Père Duchêne*, Hébert was a contemptible coward. When he was taken through the rue Saint-Honoré (March 24th, 1794), on his way to the scaffold, the composed, philosophical Anacharsis Cloots—who had promoted himself as "Orator of Mankind"—said to him, as they were passing the Jacobin Club: "Hébert! c'est le moment ou jamais de descendre pour faire une motion!"[1]

But Hébert shuddered and recoiled, uttering loud, pitiful cries. The mob danced round the tumbril, singing:

"Ciel, il était si patriote!
Il faisait des discours si beaux!
Pourquoi siffle-t-il la linotte,
Le fameux marchand de fourneaux."

It was a bitter sarcasm on the second title of le Père Duchêne: the dealer in stoves.

The *café* proprietors often became celebrated men; Chrétien, owner of the Café de Choiseuil, was promoted to the position of Juryman of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Cuisinier, the proprietor of the Café du Pont-Saint-Michel, was summoned to the rue des Cordeliers as commander of the guards in his section, when Charlotte Corday had murdered Marat (July 13th, 1793). He arrived with his national guards at the house of Marat, and, after a preliminary examination, took her himself to the Prison l'Abbaye, amidst the savage yells and uproar of the multitude.[2]

[1] Georges Avenil, *Anacharsis Cloots: l'orateur du genre humain* (1865), II., p. 472.

[2] Alfred Bougeart, *Marat l'ami du peuple* (1865), II, p. 269.

HÉBERT. [*To face p.* 100.

Even during the darkest days of the Reign of Terror, there existed a *café* for *ci-devants* (aristocrats of all descriptions) at the corner of the rues Richelieu and Saint-Honoré, as there were still some nobles left who had not taken flight.

During the trial of the Red Shirts, some very serious charges were made against a certain Baron de Batz, who succeeded in baffling the police in a most inexplicable manner.

The Cafés Hottot, de Choiseuil, and Beauquesne, were the favourite resorts of Robespierre's partisans, and it certainly looked somewhat ominous that those who professed the warmest friendship for *le vertueux* Maximilien, *le grand* Incorruptible, belonged in reality to the lowest classes. Robespierre himself believed that this refuse of the Parisian population consisted purely of honest supporters of the Revolutionary principles, and friends of the Republic. He did not perceive that the important events of the Revolution had brought a floating population of all kinds of tramps, adventurers, and vagabonds, from the departments to Paris. He need only have gone to the galleries of the Palais Royal in the evening to become convinced that the new political liberty had produced a disquieting freedom of all kinds of license and immorality.

Amidst the insecurity of life, and while the fear of imprisonment and the guillotine increased daily, there grew up a very unwholesome desire for all sorts of sensual pleasure.

At nine o'clock in the evening, crowds of priestesses of Aphrodite Pandemos flocked into the gardens and

galleries of the Palais Royal, and, to judge from the costumes, it seemed more like an aristocratic or fashionable gathering.

These ladies, with their high-crowned hats of white or yellow straw and waving feathers, with low, tight-fitting dresses of showy colours, and broad tricoloured belts; with tall plaited caps, their loose and curly hair tied with light blue satin ribbon—all of them carrying huge variegated fans;—were sauntering about through the galleries and gardens, peeping into the brightly lit windows of the various shops, or taking rest and refreshment at the little tables of the Café de Foy. A small number of Muscadins, and some of the few foreigners, mingled with this strange crowd, which laughed and shouted as wildly as the political orators inside the busy *cafés*.

XXVII

YET MORE OF ROBESPIERRE'S ENEMIES

DURING the Reign of Terror a party had arisen, which, from 1795 to 1800, was to play an important political *rôle*—the youth of Paris, who soon acquired the name of "les Muscadins."

Already, in 1791, most of the young men in Paris were counter-Revolutionary, and—in contrast with the *jeunesse dorée*—these Muscadins fought for the retention of the old French sociability, the good old customs, and the humorous literature, of earlier days; they were the swells, the dandies, *les petits-maîtres* of that time.

The name *jeunesse dorée* was still unheard of in 1794, and had not even appeared in print,[1] as *la jeunesse Parisienne* belonged to all classes.

It was they who showed themselves hostile to the course of the Revolution, who hated the sans-culottes, and showed it in their costume.

A good Jacobin could always be distinguished by his attire: his coarse red cap, with its tricoloured cockade, his bare neck, destitute of a scarf, his long-sleeved waistcoat—carmagnole—his long trousers, and his feet bare or in clogs.

[1] Adolf Schmidt, *Pariser Zustände*, I., pp. 197—204.

The Muscadins heartily detested this Robespierrean livery. To show their hatred of sansculottism, they wore hats with high crowns and broad rims, showy waistcoats of the lightest colours, broad scarves of cashmere reaching up to the chin, short breeches, silk stockings, and carried heavy walking-sticks or stout canes.

The name sans-culottes simply implied the absence of short knee-breeches, which were replaced by long pantaloons reaching below the ankle. This group of young Parisians naturally comprised but few aristocrats, as the latter had either emigrated or were serving as officers in the various armies of the Republic.

The Muscadins belonged to the middle classes, and included the sons of bankers, merchants, manufacturers, "propriétaires," and gentlemen (rentiers), and were, for the most part, young officials, students of the university, advocates, doctors, and surgeons; the *cafés* of the Palais Royal, the sectional assemblies, the studios, and the colleges, were their principal rendezvous.

After May 1793—the fall of the Girondins—they became of some importance as a political party; but they were not in love with the Republic, they were not anxious to be carried in the last boat (*le dernier bateau*) or to join in the last cry (*le dernier cri*); they preferred the constitutional monarchy. The day of August 10th, 1792, and the terrible September massacres, had rendered the Revolutionary principles distasteful to them, and many, who objected to witness the proceedings in Paris, joined the army.

When the Girondins were attacked in the Conven-

tion, these youths created opposition in the sectional assembly by assaulting the Jacobins with chairs, forms, and other such weapons. They had meetings in the Champs Elysées, and called themselves *la jeunesse modérée*; they assembled during May 1793 on the Quai de Gévres—between the Pont au Change and Pont de Notre Dame—shouting: "Down with Marat! To the guillotine with Marat!"

But the Jacobin municipal government had some of them arrested, so that these disturbances were put a stop to; still, they managed to assault Marat one evening, after the sitting of the Convention, and gave him a very sound thrashing.

The party was very numerous, and numbered amongst its members about twenty-five thousand clerks and officials, besides twenty thousand sons of well-to-do citizens.

They visited the *cafés*, theatres, and gambling-houses, where they made no secret of their antipathy to the political anarchy in Paris; while in occasional skirmishes they invariably took the part of those against the Revolutionary leaders.

In the evening, many of them were to be found in the Café du Caveau and the Café de Chartres (both at the Palais Royal), and in the Café Procope, where they maintained that the municipal council (commune) should be dissolved, and the Convention protected with eighty thousand men.

They thoroughly disliked General Hanriot and openly showed their hatred by hissing and hooting him when he was passing on horseback. Hanriot had been appointed by the Jacobins and the friends

of Robespierre as military commander of Paris, and he was therefore charged with the supreme command of the Parisian national guards and the garrison.

The Muscadins owed their nickname to Hébert, who had first christened them, in his *Père Duchêne*, after some musk pastilles, which they used as a kind of scent.

During the Reign of Terror they remained satisfied with a prudent opposition, but after Robespierre's death, on 10 Thermidor (July 28th, 1794), they placed themselves at the head of the extreme reaction. They drove away the remnants of the Jacobin army, caused hundreds of prisoners to be liberated, renewed the entire staff of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and dismissed both governing committees, with the result that Barère, the arch-intriguer, Collot d'Herbois and Billaud-Varenne, the two dissolute actors, disappeared from the scenes, to be banished shortly afterwards.

But the Muscadins continued to pay attention to their attire and personal appearance; their hair was never closely cropped, after the Jacobin fashion, but they remained faithful to powder and tails; they wore cuffs and frills (*jabots*), and expensive jewelled pins in their enormous scarves.

It is somewhat remarkable that Robespierre adhered to the same costume. He always wore a hat, never a cap; a frock coat, cuffs and jabots, and knee-breeches; for which reason Carlyle has called him "a culottic man."

The Muscadins could, therefore, appeal to the example of the most celebrated personage in Paris. But during the Reign of Terror they already appeared

with large round eyeglasses, little scent-bottles, short, crooked sticks of vine-wood, light green scarves, and grey coats with black collars.

After Thermidor they committed all kinds of excesses, and became the Incroyables and the Merveilleux of the Directoire and the Consulate. Notwithstanding the depressed feelings of the large majority amongst the better classes, these young men showed themselves very spirited, especially in the *cafés*, where it was a question of loud shouting.

They displayed personal courage enough, but, at the same time, too little steadfastness to make a lasting impression on public opinion. Many members of the Convention, many leaders of the Cordeliers and Jacobins, mixed freely with the Muscadins, and joined in their debauches. Hébert and Marat generally feasted at home, but Danton and the principal Cordeliers were frequently to be found in the numerous gambling dens of la Maison Egalité, while Hérault-Séchelles and Fréron took the lead amongst the *viveurs* of 1793 and 1794. Even Augustin Robespierre sometimes consorted with the Muscadins, and had visited the salons of the ladies Saint-Amaranthe.

And in the midst of all this, Maximilien Robespierre adhered closely to his duties as a man and a citizen, distinguished himself by rare self-control and exemplary conduct, and pursued his difficult path honourably and steadily amidst all kinds of temptations.

He, like Saint-Just, Couthon, M. and Mme. le Bas, and the family Duplay, remained true to the strictest laws of respectability and morality. All he wanted was a little worldly wisdom and a spark of genius.

XXVIII

LE VENTRE DE PARIS

TILL now the greatest enemy of Robespierre, the greatest enemy of the whole Republican State, has not been alluded to: Hunger.

In 1793 and 1794 a famine raged in Paris, which has only been surpassed by the sufferings during 1870–71, when the German armies besieged the great city on the Seine. The causes of the famine of 1793–94 were of a different nature, however, and were in the main due to the mismanagement and errors committed by the men who formed the Government of the Republic.

And now we come to a long and sad story.

The exorbitant prices of the necessities of life in 1789 arose from the failure of the crops in the preceding year. The ministers of Louis XVI. fixed the cost of bread by law, and bought grain abroad; notwithstanding this, prices rose excessively high. Hence the procession of hungry women from the Parisian slums to Versailles on October 5th and 6th, 1789, to compel the king and queen to reside in the capital. The famished mob thought that bread would certainly become cheaper if only the king took up his residence at the Tuileries. The purchase of grain abroad cost,

in 1789, seventeen million livres [illegible] in two months, of which the greater part, however, flowed back into the treasury.

The crops of 1790 had been very satisfactory; bread became cheaper, and the prices fixed by law were abolished.

In 1791 the import duties on meat, wine, and fuel, for Paris were withdrawn, which meant a loss of ten million livres to the town, and twenty-seven million to the State. To meet various deficiencies in the revenue, Necker proposed in 1789, for the first time, an issue of assignats, to the amount of four hundred and ninety million livres (about £20,000,000), the value of which would be covered by the confiscated possessions of the clergy. This was therefore a kind of first mortgage on property, which was not so easily realisable; still, these first assignats with the king's portrait were something more than waste paper, and represented a real value. Unfortunately Necker's example was followed in far too reckless a manner. In 1791 another issue of eight hundred million livres (£32,000,000) was granted, which could only just be covered by *les biens nationaux* (national property). But in 1792, six hundred million livres more were added, and, continuing thus, the amount of assignats in circulation in May 1793 had risen to three thousand one hundred million livres.

It was inevitable that all kinds of unusual [illegible] should result from this enormous flood of paper money.

In the first place, false assignats were manufactured in spite of the penalty of capital punishment. [illegible]

a political struggle ensued as to the respective values of the paper which bore the king's portrait and that issued by the Republic. Thirdly, precious metal was withdrawn, and a trade arose in gold and silver by "agioteurs," resulting in the constant diminution in value of the assignats, in spite of the fact that those who tendered or accepted these notes under their nominal value were liable to be sentenced to death. But the worst result of all was the enormous rise in prices of the most essential commodities of life.

In the beginning of February 1793 a pound of beef ($\frac{1}{2}$ kilo or $1\frac{1}{10}$ English lb.) cost in Paris one livre, while a pound of bread ($\frac{1}{2}$ kilo) was not to be had under six sous (about 3*d.*); and on the 25th of that month the mob made its first attack on the bakers' shops.

The Government, the two Committees, and the Convention, could find no means but force. The war cost enormous sums; the revenue of the State continually decreased, through the general distress and the depression of trade. And now the fatal resolution was passed to fix by law the maximum prices of bread and grain—April 5th and May 4th, 1793. The Commune appointed a separate committee—Administration des Subsistances—to provide the Parisian populace with good and cheap bread. In former years the price had been about three sous per pound, and the bakers could only supply at this figure if they were able to buy flour at fifty livres per sack. But by the new law, fixing the maximum charges, the price of flour rose, and a sack which had cost sixty-five livres in February could not now be procured under a hundred livres.

The Administration des Subsistances (Committee of Supplies) could not cope with these difficulties except by highly artificial and precarious methods.

As maximum price of corn it had taken the average rates ruling between January 1st and May 1st, and this measure gave the death-blow to the corn trade. The flour-merchants and the farmers round Paris opposed the decree, while in the departments the new law of May 4th was often secretly disregarded, and bread was sold there at from ten to twelve sous per pound (about 5*d.*). The consequence was that the supply of flour to Paris, where fourteen to fifteen hundred sacks were required daily, fell greatly short of the demand, and the Committee of Supplies began to purchase grain at home, as well as abroad, for the State.

The bakers, who bought at high prices from the Government stores, received a rebate to enable them to sell their bread at the maximum; and as a sack of flour was delivered in the spring of 1793 at ninety livres, the State lost forty livres on every one that was thus sold.

The Parisians, then, as now, lived chiefly on bread and meat, and the supply and demand of the latter also caused the greatest perplexity. The cattle farmers were not disposed to take their stock to the Parisian markets, as they would have to accept assignats at the nominal value. In May 1793 only four hundred head of cattle came to the market at Passy, instead of the seven to eight thousand of former times.

And of this unimportant supply, at least half had to be set aside for the armies.

It was evident that the chief cause of all this adversity was the issue of worthless paper money, which could only retain some apparent value through extreme Government pressure. Everything would have been saved if the State had only been able to thrust some hypothetical value under this mountain of paper.

Very soon there arose a great dearth of coffee, sugar, fuel, rice, brandy, wine, and similar comestibles. The shopkeepers professed to have no more stocks, and found themselves threatened by the angry and starving masses. The crowds accused them of having hidden their wares in cellars, with the object of selling them to the rich at extravagant prices; and, true enough, the well-to-do laid in large stocks of provisions, at almost any price, for fear of being reduced to want in the near future. The populace demanded that the houses should be searched, and the hidden treasures divided among the people, and threatened the bakers with plunder.

It was under these circumstances that accusations were brought against the moderate party of the Girondins, at the end of May 1793; and although it was said that, after their fall, all would be well again, there was no improvement during the Reign of Terror.

But few enough cattle came to the market at Passy, and the butchers did not mend matters by salting their meat, with the object of selling it outside France, in order to receive payment in gold and silver.

Veal, which was formerly sold at five sous per pound, was sold at twenty-two sous in June 1793,

while beef was not obtainable under thirty sous. This led to the idea of co-operation; several of the better-class citizens joined together, bought slaughter cattle, and distributed the meat among themselves at much more favourable prices. But the butchers held to the high rates, and everywhere the maximum was asked.

At the rise of all commodities—sugar had risen from one livre to four livres per pound—the difficulties with regard to the circulation of money increased.

The assignats, manufactured by the Republic, were disposed of with the greatest difficulty; those bearing the royal portrait fared somewhat better, and the departments which traded with the capital would only accept the latter or precious metal.

After June 12th, 1793, the bread famine became more severe. The bakers were quite unable to supply in sufficient quantities, and great disturbances took place in front of their shops. They and the Committee of Supplies were accused of malevolence, and when it was found that a large quantity of flour had turned musty in the warehouses of the Commune, the situation was hardly improved.

Also in the outskirts of Paris, bread was becoming scarce, and the farmers came to the capital solely to procure the large four-pound loaves, at the maximum price of twelve sous. These loaves were generally preferred, as the smaller ones cost a few sous more in proportion to their weight.

Everybody tried now to obtain as large a quantity of bread as possible, by fair means or foul. The women of the back streets waited for hours outside the

bakeries, till the large loaves were turned out of the oven, and everywhere the buyers had to wait in a line—*faire queue*—for the greater part of the day, to secure their bread.

All this, it was said, would not have happened during the monarchy; and the dissatisfaction increased.

XXIX

LE VENTRE DE PARIS II

ON July 26th, 1793, the riotous mob took to destroying eggs and vegetables at some of the Parisian markets, because it could not pay the high charges.

As the prices of flour rose, notwithstanding the fixed maximum, the municipal council and the Committee of Public Safety tried to take fresh measures. The dealers in grain and flour avoided the markets, as they objected to sell at the maximum prices. It was on the day mentioned above, that Robespierre was elected member of the Committee on the proposal of Jean-Bon-Saint-André. It then comprised the following members: Barere, Thuriot, Couthon, Saint-Just, Prieur de la Marne, Robert Lindet, Hérault-Séchelles, and Jean-Bon-Saint-André.

He immediately tried to provide means against the material distress, demanding that the laws with regard to maximum prices should be revised, and stating his objections to the Act which prohibited the buying up of necessities of life. As he was well aware that the Parisians were in the habit of purchasing more sugar than they needed for immediate use, he insisted that the death-sentence should not be applicable to those who were found guilty of laying in stores of this article.

But one of the members of the Convention—the grey-haired Raffron du Trouillet—exclaimed :

"I demand the death-penalty for those who buy up sugar, as much as for any other monopolists (*accapareurs*)."

Robespierre strongly opposed Collot d'Herbois, who proposed a few days later to declare as "suspects" those merchants who sold the first necessities of life at too high rates ; and, as a result of this opposition, the Committee rejected the motion. The Committee had already closed the exchange on June 24th, 1793, with the object of striking a blow at the "agiotage," and preventing the decline in value of the assignats; while on July 31st it was decided to call in all which had been issued during the monarchy, with the exception of those under a hundred livres. The forced rate of these assignats was withdrawn, and it was also stipulated that they should be accepted by the Government until December 31st, 1793.

As the stock-jobbers traded secretly in gold and silver—generally at night in the Palais Royal—the value of the paper money necessarily declined. Rents rose in Paris according to the actual value of these notes ; houses worth thirty thousand livres were sold for a hundred thousand livres in paper. As a consequence of all this, the Government once more had recourse to drastic measures, and threatened with severe punishment those who refused the assignats of the Republic or accepted or tendered these under their nominal value (August 1st, September 5th, 1793).

On September 4th Paris was greatly excited. The news that Toulon had been taken by the English

spread terror amongst the population; the bakers had been unable to supply their customers; food was terribly scarce, and famishing crowds paraded the streets and collected in front of the Hôtel-de-Ville, clamouring loudly for bread.

Chaumette, attorney-general of the Commune, hastened to the Convention, which was just then engaged in discussing the amendment of the maximum law. He communicated the dismal news, and Robespierre, who was president at the time, replied:

"The Convention is now occupied with the supplies, and consequently with the welfare of the people."

With this piece of practical consolation, Chaumette —the arch-enemy of Church and religion—returned to the town hall, and promised the multitude that the maximum law should be amended in a few days; but "ventre affamé n'a pas d'oreilles." The mob shouted that promises were worthless, and demanded bread, bread instantly; upon which Chaumette assured them that corn and flour should be brought to the markets (les Halles) at once, and that there would be abundance of bread in the morning.

The Commune was obliged to ignore the maximum law, and purchased flour at a hundred and forty to a hundred and fifty livres per sack; therefore, during the first days of September, bread was obtainable in sufficient quantities.

A stormy sitting of the Convention took place on September 5th, 1793, the last day of Robespierre's presidency. A deputation from the Section de la Cité, led by the chairman Dobsent, complained of the

scarcity of bread and grain. They were followed by a deputation from the Commune, led by the mayor Pache; and Chaumette, who spoke for them, maintained that the enemies of the Revolution had forced the prices of bread and obstructed the supply of flour to Paris. He proposed that a small Revolutionary army should be formed of the poorest citizens, to protect the supplies of commodities at the barrières and in the vicinity of Paris. This army of six thousand infantry and twelve hundred artillery should be accompanied by an *incorruptible* tribunal and the *sainte* guillotine, that the traitors might be executed without delay. Chaumette further proposed that potatoes should at once be planted in all the squares and gardens of Paris.

After this speech, a band of noisy loiterers forced their way into the hall, and all kinds of extraordinary proposals were made. Billaud-Varenne demanded the immediate arrest of all the enemies of the Revolution. Danton suggested that the Revolutionary army should at once be organised, according to the proposition of Chaumette, and also that the Revolutionary Tribunal should be divided into various sections, to facilitate the punishment of a greater number of traitors; further, that special meetings of the sections should be held every Sunday and Thursday, and that the workman who attended these, and consequently sacrificed his time, should be allowed a compensation of forty sous (two francs).

The audience clamoured loudly by way of approval. Billaud-Varenne further insisted that a house-to-house search should be made nightly, to hunt out foreign

priests and nobles. Barère demanded that the right should be given to the forty-eight Revolutionary Committees to disarm and arrest all suspected persons.

Fatigue had obliged Robespierre to retire for a while, and to leave the presidency in the hands of Thuriot; and during his absence the motions of Billaud-Varenne and Barère were passed and made law. And now appeared a third deputation, representing the forty-eight sections, accompanied by a commission from the Jacobins, requesting the Convention to place "la Terreur à l'ordre du jour." The proposal of the renowned jurist, Merlin de Douai, was accepted, which provided that all those who had spoken against the assignats should be punished by the guillotine, and likewise those who had refused to accept this paper money at its nominal value.

When Robespierre had resumed the chair, a fourth deputation arrived from the Section de l'Unité—on the left bank of the Seine, between the Quai Malaquet and the rue des Saints-Pères—and clamoured for laws against "agiotage" and the accumulation of comestibles.

Robespierre, led away by his optimism, replied to this deputation in an eloquent but empty speech:

"The people shall be free, for they are as reasonable, as enlightened and generous, as they are dauntless. They shall be free, because the genius of Liberty guides their steps. They have returned to their enemies the very snares which were designed for their own ruin, and every conspiracy is but another means of demonstrating public virtue. The national Convention should be worthy of such a people, *et elle le sera.*"

These words were loudly and continuously applauded; but the assembly did not understand that they expressed the generosity and good faith of the speaker, rather than his practical common-sense.

After Barère had once more demanded that the Terreur should be the order of the day, it was decided to accept Chaumette's motion—to form a Revolutionary army of six thousand foot-soldiers and twelve hundred artillery from the poorest Parisian citizens for the protection of food supplies and to assist in the execution of the decrees of the Convention. Nothing further was said about tribunal or guillotine.

From September 1793 the real Reign of Terror began, and the misery continued unabated in Paris. At four o'clock in the morning, hungry crowds congregated in front of the bakers' shops. The patrols dared not interfere with them, for hunger and privation had made the famished mob desperate. The Convention continued to fix maximum prices for wine, meat, and all kinds of food. On September 19th there were general complaints of the inferior quality of bread, and five days later there was again a great scarcity of this commodity. The disturbances in front of the bakeries now began as early as two o'clock in the morning.

Le ventre de Paris cried aloud for food.

XXX

FINANCIAL MISMANAGEMENT

ON the memorable day of September 5th, 1793, the proposal of the celebrated Merlin de Douai had been accepted, by which the extreme penalty of the law was to be visited on those who refused the assignats of the Republic, or dealt in them under their nominal value.

The consequence of this new law was, that the smaller traders, preferring the loss of money to the loss of life, accepted the notes at their nominal value, and Cambon, the head of the Department of Finance, dared therefore to declare in the Convention, on November 21st, 1793, that the Republican assignats were at par with silver.

This referred to transactions in the retail trade only, for those dealers who secretly offered gold and silver knew better, while often the Departments concerned themselves little enough about the new law.

Cambon, the ever-sanguine, was accustomed to cajole his colleagues with fine phrases, and such was his optimism in financial matters that he was even suspected of having acquired a large fortune by clever manœuvring.[1]

[1] Prof. Dr. Adolf Schmidt, *Pariser* [illegible] 144.

Meanwhile, the law of September 5th caused a rise in the assignats during the Terreur, and in December 1793 they were quoted at 51 per cent.; this enticed the Government to fresh issues. The war, and the financial support extended to Paris and the suffering departments, demanded huge sums; the management and interest of the national debt alone cost 200,000,000 livres yearly. The forced loan of 1,000,000,000 livres on August 28th, 1793, was of little benefit to the treasury, as this was chiefly paid with the royal assignats, which the Government wished to withdraw from circulation, and the net result of the loan was therefore but 200,000,000 livres.

From February 1st to May 7th new assignats had been issued to the value of 1,220,000,000 livres. The taxes produced far less gold and silver than formerly, and other sources of revenue had suffered likewise, so that the Government now required 254,000,000 livres monthly. In addition to this, the war cost every month from 180,000,000 to 200,000,000 livres, while the expenditure on corn ranged from 100,000,000 to 120,000,000 livres.

After the rise in value of the paper money—a consequence of the law of Merlin de Douai—the Government issued, on September 28th, 1793, 2,000,000,000 livres, to be followed on December 7th by a further amount of 500,000,000 livres in smaller values; the flood did not seem to abate, and on June 14th, 1794, another 1,400,000,000 livres was added.

From June 1793 to June 1794, therefore, the issue of assignats amounted to more than the total of the four preceding years.

But the stockjobbers quietly continued to lower the value of the assignats, and in June 1794 they were quoted at 34 per cent., in spite of the fact that sales and purchases at this rate were made at the risk of decapitation.

During the autumn and winter of 1793, when Lyons was besieged by the troops of the Convention and afterwards sacked by Fouché, when Toulon was recaptured, when the hapless queen was doomed to the guillotine, and in spite of Robespierre's opposition the savage and atheistic Hébertists triumphed, the unfortunate Parisians suffered miserably from scarcity and privation: a simple result of the scandalous mismanagement of the State finances.

As the famished plebeians needed some one on whom to vent their rage, they selected the Committee of Supplies, and especially one of its members, Garin, a former baker, who had written a bombastic pamphlet on July 24th, 1793, entitled: *Paris saved by the Committee of Supplies*, in which he charged the ex-minister Garat with the intention of starving Paris.

Garat had been a member of the Executive Government until the adoption of the new constitution of 1793, and the dismissal of all responsible ministers (June 24th), but he was still a member of the Convention, and as such protested against this foolish accusation. The result was the arrest of Garin, who was liberated, however, through the influence of the Commune; but Marchand, one of its members, indignant at this procedure, accused Garin in his section (Section des Sans-culottes), maintaining that, as member of the administration, he had bought di i

flour at low prices, and supplied bad bread to the Parisians.

Garin replied to this charge, that those who found fault with the quality of bread were disguised agents of Pitt and Coburg—that everlasting accusation, which was in every one's mouth during the Reign of Terror.

In October 1793 maximum prices were fixed on nearly all wares, not even excepting boots and fuel. The maximum was calculated according to the cost of production and transport, with an additional 5 per cent. for the wholesale, and 10 per cent. for the retail trade.

Many prices were consequently forced to decline, and the lower classes attributed this pleasant fact to "*le vertueux* Maximilien" and the Committee of Public Safety. But not all the members of the latter approved of the prices fixed by law and the issues of assignats; Saint-Just pointed out the probable results of these measures, but submitted to the majority in the Committee.

It was evident that these regulations were not conducive to the revival of trade; the retail merchants saw soon enough that they could not sell at the maximum rates, and many of those dealing in fuel closed their establishments. The Revolutionary Army had been formed as proposed by Chaumette, and these troops of armed vagabonds and good-for-nothings occupied the barrières of Paris and reconnoitred the villages and towns of the neighbourhood. They plundered and taxed the farmers, who, in desperation, took to self-defence; and as a result of the terror which spread through this civil war round Paris, Chaumette's army was disbanded in February 1794.

Meanwhile, want and distress increased within the city ; goods were withdrawn from traffic, the farmers declined to take their produce to the capital, and if now and then a waggon appeared at one of the southern barrières—barrière de Vaurigard, or barrière de l'Enfer—there was always an eager crowd of viragos ready to seize it, and woe to the poor Jacques Bonhomme who did not swiftly agree to their terms !

The direst wretchedness prevailed in the overcrowded prisons. Many *ci-devants*, many priests and officials, were not allowed any straw to sleep upon, asked in vain for a drink of water, and could not obtain a simple meal, notwithstanding their daily bill of ten francs. The villas round Paris stood empty, the owners having been accused as usurers and monopolists.

The material misery reached such a pitch that a general famine was feared, and the Commune once more intervened with a decree (October 29th, 1793), that no citizen should be allowed to buy more bread than was strictly necessary for himself and his household. Every one had to report the size of his family, and thereupon received a card with thirty coupons, negotiable for one month—each coupon stating the quantity of bread which it was allowable to purchase. Further, the various qualities were abolished ;[1] there was to be no more fine or coarse, no more good or inferior bread, but one sort only : *pain de l'Egalité*.

As the scarcity of flour became more and more threatening, the Committee of Public Safety decided to order it from North America, according to the agreement made between the two Republics in

[1] *Moniteur*, November 26th, 1793.

September 1793; but it was not until June 1794 that a fleet of a hundred and sixteen American vessels, loaded with flour, cast anchor in the harbour of Brest.

There was one noteworthy fact in the midst of all this adversity: the triumph of the Republic, and the principles of the Revolution, were not despaired of.

The Left in the Convention, the Mountain, the Jacobins, the Committee, Robespierre and all his friends, never lost courage; the victories of the French armies over nearly all united Europe made them carry their heads proudly. If bread was bad and dear, if life was beset with difficulties, if pleasures were few and dangers many, all this was the fault of Pitt and Coburg: but the Republic would be triumphant.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. [*To face p.* 189.

XXXI

NO MEAT

WAS it due to the many disasters, or was there another cause for Robespierre's continued indisposition during January, February, and March, 1794?

His work at the sittings of the Convention in the morning, the Committee during the day, and the Jacobin Club in the evening, would have taxed stronger constitutions than his, and it was hardly a matter for surprise that his many employments told on his health. From February 4th to 14th he was confined to his room;[1] from the 15th to the 18th he appeared in the Convention; but on the 19th he had again to keep his bed.

The news of his illness caused some consternation in the Revolutionary Committees of various sections, which continually sent commissions to inquire after his health; and the house of citizen Duplay—No. 366, rue Saint-Honoré,—was besieged by inquirers.

Couthon also fell ill.

A document still exists in which the Section de l'Unité—between the Quai Malaquet and the r[illegible] Saints-Pères—nominated four members "to [illegible]d

[1] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III.,

to the residences of Robespierre and Couthon, to ascertain their state of health, which should be very dear to every good citizen, and to report to the Section the result of their mission." [1]

These troublous times were doubtless not beneficial to the tranquillity of his mind, as his highly strung and sensitive nature made him doubly apprehensive; and this was possibly the reason of the serious nature of his illness at the end of February and the beginning of March 1794.

During the first months of that year the whole of Paris was dissatisfied. Meat had become exceptionally scarce. In consequence of the law fixing the maximum sale prices, the cattle-markets were either forsaken or badly supplied; the farmers refused to dispose of their stock at the fixed rates, and the Convention was therefore obliged, on October 23rd, 1793, to pass a decree excepting *bétail sur pied*, which resulted in more extensive transactions in cattle. But still, all kinds of animals were very scarce.

As France was at war with all Europe, there were naturally but few supplies from beyond the frontier; Switzerland alone remained open. The Vendée, which had previously been an important source of the cattle supply, no longer sent either oxen or sheep; while the little Revolutionary army of Chaumette had pillaged the districts round Paris and emptied them of almost everything. Two departments only, le Bourbonnais and le Limousin, continued to send cattle, but most of these were wanted for the army, or, rather, for the fourteen armies.

[1] *Papiers Inédits*, II., p. 121.

The butchers sold the worst meat to the poorer classes at the former maximum prices, while the better qualities were sold to the rich at excessively high rates. Those butchers who were the purveyors of the State and Commune, supplying hospitals and other public institutions, could only obtain the maximum prices for the best qualities, which resulted in serious losses for many of them.

They petitioned the Convention to compensate them, but the assembly made matters still worse by repealing the law of October 23rd, which excepted slaughter cattle from the maximum, and proclaiming a fresh decree, by which special prices were enforced. The result of this new measure soon became apparent: the total absence of cattle from the markets, and riots in front of the butchers' shops which the police and national guards were powerless to suppress. The poor housewives, who were unable to purchase even the worst meat, could now and then procure fish, but the oil or butter to fry it in were often unobtainable.

Several protests were made in the Convention against this state of affairs. Barère declared, in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, that the fourteen armies were mainly responsible for the scarcity of foods, but, out of love for the country, the population should make the sacrifice.

Légendre maintained that the maximum prices of slaughter cattle would not lessen the distress, but he demanded that the meat should be given to the defenders of the country, and that a perpetual national fast should be decreed.

Cambon replied to this that fasti t

superstitions of the *ci-devant* church, and that this must not be imitated.

The Commune decided, meanwhile, that invalids, convalescents, and young mothers, should not be left without meat, and ordered that twenty-five oxen, sixty-six calves, and thirty-three sheep, should be killed every day for the use of such persons throughout the forty-eight sections,[1] while one ox, two calves, and one sheep, should be set apart for the sick in the prisons. This meat could only be obtained on presenting vouchers signed by doctors; and everything was under the direction of the Committee of Supplies.

And so the time arrived when the poorer classes were forced into a more or less rigid fast, while the rich could only procure meat at exorbitant prices; and it is hardly surprising that the same practice prevailed as in 1870 and 1871, when cats and dogs were considered a fit diet for man. The Parisians had to be content to sacrifice nearly all meat supplies to the army, and patriotism on the one hand, and fear of the guillotine on the other, reduced them to submission.

How well the armies were provisioned is to some extent shown by the fact that a military pork-butchery existed near the Jardin du Roi, where four hundred pigs were daily killed on behalf of the Government. The liver, heart, and lungs, were sold to the Parisians at high prices; and it is recorded that crowds of unfortunate housewives waited before this slaughter-house hour after hour to procure a small supply of these eatables. The agents of the Committee searched

[1] Adolf Schmidt, *Pariser Zustände*, II., p. 182.

everywhere in the homes of the citizens for stocks of pork, which were larger than was needed.

A report exists, written by the spy Perrière, and dated March 14th, 1794 (24 Ventôse), in which reference is made to this in the following words:—

"Although salted pork is scarce in Paris, and to obtain only half a pound it is necessary to lose considerable time, first in front of the Committees to obtain the certificate, and afterwards before the pork-butcher's shop to procure the prescribed quantity, I have to-day seen a large pot, full of pork, at an innkeeper's in one of the suburbs of the town, who, notwithstanding his abundant stock, charged 30 sous (about 14*d.*) for a small piece hardly weighing half a pound. The same man had some baskets full of eggs."[1]

Matters went from bad to worse. In the Section des Sans-culottes, near the Jardin du Roi, candles were unobtainable; eggs and butter were likewise not to be had. The markets had sold out completely by nine o'clock in the morning. As potatoes and vegetables had become exceedingly scarce, the parks and public gardens were used for growing these commodities.

A natural result of this was that the working people demanded higher wages. They received only 3 to 3½ livres daily—far too little to maintain themselves and their families under the given circumstances, while the unemployed attended the meetings of the sections twice weekly, to earn their two francs.

It was during these times of difficulty and hardship that Robespierre slowly recovered fr his serious

[1] C. A. Dauban, *Paris en 1794 et en 1795* (231.

illness, to engage at once, on his return to the Convention, in the impending struggle with Hébert and his party. We will delay the description of this contest for a moment in order to throw some light on the precarious conditions under which the Parisians lived during the winter of 1793 and 1794.

The law which had been applied to bread was now likewise made applicable to meat—namely, official distribution amongst the citizens and house visitations, and again the Hébertist Section de la Cité made itself conspicuous, notwithstanding the complete defeat of the Hébertist party. In a meeting of this section (April 14th, 1794), it was proposed that every one of its citizens, on producing his bread ticket, should be allowed a corresponding quantity of meat.

But the Commune forebade the execution of this project, as a single section was not empowered to decide for itself on the food question; but it soon appeared that this measure would have to be enforced, and shortly afterwards, the Commune resolved, with the approval of the Committee of Public Safety, that every citizen should be allowed to buy only such a quantity of meat as was deemed necessary for the number of his family.

XXXII

"PANEM ET CIRCENSES!"

WHENEVER, in the Rome of the Triumvirs and the Emperors, the people's rage thundered and roared like a veritable tempest, seas of famished plebeians surged and swayed on the marble steps of the Capitol, clamouring for "Panem et Circenses"; so, during the spring of 1794, Paris resounded with the cries of the populace: "Bread and theatres!" "Meat and theatres!"

Of bread and meat the want was indeed pressing.

The Committee of Public Safety decided that only a certain quantity of meat was to be consumed in Paris day by day—if the cattle were procurable—namely, 75 oxen, 200 pigs, and 165,000 lb. of veal and mutton.

The Commune decreed that all cattle should be slaughtered at a central place under its own control, and that the Committee of Supplies should divide the meat amongst the butchers of the forty-eight sections, who, in their turn, would distribute this to the population.

Three hundred householders would be supplied daily, and every five days the citizens were thus allowed to buy half a pound of meat for each member of their

families. Meat tickets were issued to them, stating the quantity thus obtainable, and the days of delivery.

The distribution was to take place in the presence of a commissioner of the Commune, who checked the tickets and struck out the dates. The butchers were allowed an additional 10 per cent., to enable them to sell at the maximum prices.

The purchase of cattle had to be undertaken by the Commune itself, and the Committee of Supplies was instructed to buy oxen, sheep, calves, and pigs, for Paris and the armies.

A little later, distributions of butter, eggs, and cheese, were made in a similar way, under the supervision of the commissioners of the Commune. Discontent spread among the bakers' and butchers' assistants, who asked for higher wages and more food, in spite of the fact that many had been dismissed, owing to scarcity of work; but their threat of striking was at once met by the Commune with the all-powerful expedient of declaring them "suspect." The smaller tradesmen, grocers, pastry-cooks, and others, closed their shops, but secretly took their wares to well-to-do citizens, who bought them at almost any price. The Commune prohibited this, and again had recourse to the same threat. Oil, soap, and candles, also became scarcer day by day, and the riots and disturbances in front of the butchers' and bakers' shops spread likewise to the oil-stores and similar retail establishments.

By a publication of the Commune on May 18th, 1794, the patience of the inhabitants was solicited; the departments were alluded to, where distress was even greater than in the capital; good order was

requested; discontinuance of riots was demanded; the splendid crops, which were anticipated were held up before them, and the poor Parisians had to be satisfied with these words, although, in many families, bread had for months been the only means of supporting life.

Many domestics and all classes of employés were dismissed; wages fell, the prices of food rose, and many households suffered terrible privations and to all this misery the obnoxious searches were added, by which domestic peace was hourly threatened. The Jacobins and Sans-culottes demanded these house visitations, in order to prosecute those who had bought up too large a quantity of food, and the servants of the State inquisition appeared now in the dwellings of rich and poor, to ascertain whether eatables had been accumulated. In this way, civil and individual liberty was continually interfered with: a bitter satire on *La Declaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen.*

A notable example of these searches has been preserved for history.[1] On the charge of Rousseville —a spy of the Committee—a house in Passy was searched, inhabited by citoyenne Lucet and ten women, all suspected of being ex-réligieuses. A quantity of butter, honey, oil, beans, and sugar, besides a whole pig, was found, and the citoyenne was fined, and nearly everything confiscated.

The members of the Committee and the Convention, who were well aware that something must be done

[1] Adolf Schmidt, *Tableaux de la Révolution française* (1869), II., pp. 214, 215.

to pacify the growing discontent, bethought themselves of the old Roman demands of "Panem et Circenses"; and as everything which recalled the Roman Republic was welcome in 1794, they tried to procure distraction for the hungry and dissatisfied Parisians by giving them free theatrical performances. Already, in 1790, the privileges of the existing theatres had been abolished; since that time every citizen had had the right to open a theatre after first informing the municipality of his intention, and all kinds of new ventures were undertaken.

The principal and oldest theatre, Théâtre Français, began to decline. The house of Molière was now called Théâtre de la Nation or Théâtre de la République, which produced chiefly the national and patriotic plays of Marie Joseph Chenier, the friend of Robespierre, who could not prevent the execution of his royalist brother André on July 26th, 1794. New theatres were continually opened—to the number of seventy-eight—and many of these, besides a small circus of the citizen Franconi of Lyons, had been erected in the rue and boulevard du Temple—situated in the eastern quarter of Paris, and so called after the old monastery of the Templars, where the royal family had been imprisoned after August 10th, 1792.

The Committee decided to do something for the enlivening of the Parisians, as well as for these numerous places of amusement. In the preceding year, the Convention had occupied itself with the question of theatres, and had passed a decree on August 2nd, 1793, of which Article II. ran as follows:

"Every theatre, where plays are produced which tend

to vitiate the public morals, or revive the scandalous superstition of royalty, will be closed forthwith, and the management arrested and punished in accordance with the law."[1]

It is remarkable, however, that no objection was made to the appearance of altar, candelabra, and crucifix, when parodies on the church, mass, and public worship, were produced in the various new theatres.

Four sections: de Marat, de Mucius Scévola, de l'Unité, and du Bonnet Rouge, proposed to the Committee of Public Safety that for the future the Théâtre de la République should give a free performance for the people, thrice every decade (ten days), to stimulate patriotic sentiments, and to lighten the general despondency.

The Committee, remembering the "Panem et Circenses!" of the Romans, passed a decree to this effect, and all kinds of patriotic plays were now performed gratis before the hungry Plebeians of Paris, such as: *la Mort de Marat*, *La Prise de Toulon par les Anglais*, *les Brigands de la Vendée*, and *Le Jugement dernier des Rois*.

Many of these dramas were so miserably constructed that the *Moniteur* of January 7th, 1794, was able to trace, in the terrible decline of French dramatic art, the scheming hands of Pitt and Coburg. The *Moniteur* stated as follows:

"In this barbarous irruption of wretched works, with which our theatres have been inundated for some months, it is easy to detect a conspiracy, paid for by

[1] Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *La Société française pendant la Révolution* (1889) II., p. 240.

Pitt and Coburg, to drag the French theatre into contempt and degradation."

As the Sansculottic public of the Circenses overcrowded the house at these free performances, the actors exerted themselves to win the approval of their ragged audience. They forsook the manners and deportment which they had acquired with such difficulty, and shouted as loudly as at the sectional meetings.

The Opéra produced a dramatic representation of the Marseillaise, invented by citizens Gardel and Gossec, under the title of *l'Offrande à La Liberté.*

The stage was filled by choirs, soldiers, children, girls, and supers, who, with fortissimo accompaniment, sang the song of Rouget de l'Isle; drums were beaten, the cannons roared, the audience joined in the song, rising from their seats and clamouring for an encore; and once more a storm of ringing voices shook the building. Eyes sparkled, cheeks glowed, the song rose high, almost *unisono*; enthusiastic applause thundered through the hall—and this lightly-kindled multitude had barely enough bread for the support of life, or had to be satisfied with the worst and dearest food; dared not utter a word at the violence of the Terror, and trembled with fear and agony when the carts of the guillotine jolted noisily past their homes.

XXXIII

"PANEM ET CIRCENSES!" (II.)

THE Convention had therefore decided that performances should be given gratuitously thrice in every decade, and mention has been made of the miserable quality of some of these patriotic plays, manufactured by incapable Sansculottes. Everything now went by the name of "patriotique"—comédies patriotiques, vaudevilles patriotiques, or sans-culottides.

At the Théâtre des Variétés amusantes, in the boulevard du Temple, an opera-vaudeville was produced, representing *Les Brigands de la Vendée*, in which the chorus, joined by the audience, sang the Carmagnole, with the refrain :

"Dansons la carmagnole,
Vive le son, vive le son,
Dansons la carmagnole,
Vive le son du canon!"

A line or verse of any real value was but rarely to be met with in the patriotic productions of these amateur authors. As the object of the free performances was mainly to develop the Republican spirit, all kinds of extraordinary incidents frequently took place.

At good news from the field of battle, one of

the actors would forsake his part for a short time, to inform the public of "the glorious victory at Fleurus," or some similar event. This ended all interest in the performance. The elated audience rose from their seats, amidst the singing of the Marseillaise, danced on the stage, or held each other in patriotic embrace.

When the Roman tragedy, *Virginie*, of la Harpe, was produced, the author himself appeared before the curtain, and recited an ode of which a critic reported that "the contents seemed more patriotic than pindaric."

The gunners of the national guards would occasionally appear on the stage of some theatres, to recite the poem of Dorat Cubières on the death of Marat. In the Théâtre *ci-devant* Français classical plays were produced in preference to others. Voltaire's *Brutus* and *Zaïre* were performed for the sake of their melodious disquisitions on political and civil liberty.

La Mort des enfants de Brutus was selected from the works of Crébillon *père*; from Lemierre's, *Guillaume Tell*, from la Harpe's, *Virginie* as mentioned above.

The Convention allowed a sum of a hundred thousand livres to compensate the managers and actors for their loss through these free performances.

The Opéra, where Hébert and Chaumette tried to sansculottise the actors and actresses, received eight thousand five hundred livres; the Théâtre *ci-devant* Français, seven thousand five hundred livres; the smaller houses, proportionally less.

It was necessary to make changes in the interior of many theatres, for the sake of the Sansculottish audiences. The curtain was often painted anew with some allegorical figure—Nature, for example—and the background was coloured with red, white, and blue stripes. The columns and consoles were changed into bundles of spears, which were ornamented at equal distances with tricoloured ribbons; while the walls of the boxes were likewise painted with the national colours.

No wonder that Jacobins and Sans-culottes found themselves at home within these halls; that they spoke in loud tones during the performance, and conversed just as noisily from the gallery with the citoyens and citoyennes in the boxes.

One evening a citizen in the pit stood up and asked the permission of the public to recite a patriotic song of his own composition. He was rewarded with general applause, and he hastened to add: "Citizens! the song which I intend to sing to you is an extract from a lyric which was refused, under some unreasonable pretexts, by the aristocratic théâtres, des Variétés, du Palais, et de Molière!"

And the audience, which, in accordance with the established Jacobin theories, considered itself sovereign, loudly exclaimed: "Elle sera jouée!"

It should be remarked besides that it was often necessary to make some alterations in the plays, for the sake of the audience.

Kings must not be mentioned except in ridicule, as in the well-known drama of citizen Sylvain Maréchal, *Le Jugement dernier des Rois*, in which all European

monarchs, the Czarina and the Pope, perished by a volcanic eruption; not a word must be said about marquises, counts, barons, or prelates.

The ballet, *Serpentin vert*, was perforce re-christened to *Serpentin aux trois couleurs*, as green was an aristocratic colour; likewise, the title of the ballet, *La belle aux cheveux d'or*, was changed to *La belle aux cheveux en assignats*. Verses of Racine, Corneille and Molière, in which the word "roi" was mentioned, were altered.

The following is an example:

Racine states:

> "Détestables flatteurs, présent le plus funeste
> Que puisse faire aux rois la colère céleste!"

This was immediately changed into:

> "Que puisse faire, hélas! la colère céleste!"

A witty spectator tried to improve on this, and exclaimed:

> "Détestables flatteurs, présent le plus funeste
> Que . . . . mais lisez Racine, et vous saurez le reste!"

Whatever their costumes might be, the actors and actresses were obliged to wear tricoloured cockades; and for this reason Brutus, Andromache, and Minerva, appeared with tricoloured ribbons on their togas and peplums. This was especially objectionable to the artists of the Théâtre *ci-devant* Français—generally Royalists or Conservatives—whom the course of events had deprived of their former privileges, and they very often inserted words or phrases in their parts which were certainly not likely to win the applause of the Jacobins.

In January 1793 a disturbance took place in this theatre, which was to have serious results. *L'Ami des Lois*, a play by citizen Laya, was performed, and as the public thought they recognised a caricature on Robespierre and Marat in the parts of Nomophage and Duricrane, the contents were held to express anti-terrorist sentiments. The following few lines especially caused an outburst of enthusiasm :

"Guerre, guerre éternelle aux faiseurs d'anarchie !
Royalistes tyrans, tyrans républicains,
Tombez devant les lois, voilà vos souverains !
Honteux d'avoir été, plus honteux encor d'être,
Brigands, l'ombre a passé, songez à disparaître !"

All the pent-up indignation of those who detested the tyranny of the Reign of Terror, who cursed the miserable situation in Paris, where bread and meat was scarcely to be obtained, and everything that was wont to make life pleasant and agreeable banished as "suspect"—where only the revolting coarseness of the Sans-culottes was victorious, and political leaders like Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon, were continually rendered powerless :—all this secret, long-repressed indignation burst forth when these verses were declaimed, and the house was shaken to its very foundations with anti-Jacobin applause.

But this was not to remain unrevenged.

On the proposal of la Section l'Union (in the heart of Paris), the municipal government decided to prohibit the representation of *L'Ami des Lois*. Citizen Laya appealed to the Convention against this decision, and the latter had the courage to annul the order of the Commune.

But the Jacobins were indignant at this, and resolved on the ruin of the old theatre.

At the performance of *Paméla*, a fairly innocent play of citizen François de Neufchâteau, a scuffle took place between the audience and the actors, because the latter had spoken in praise of the English Government. A complaint was made about this in the meeting of the Jacobins, and the Committee of Public Safety interested itself in the matter. On September 3rd, 1793, the Théâtre Français was closed, and all the actors and actresses arrested. The former went to the prison des Madelonnettes, rue des Fontaines, and the actresses were sent to the prison Sainte-Pélagie. Two of them, citoyennes Elisabeth Lange and Joséphine Mézeray, were dismissed on September 25th. All the others remained until July 28th, 1794, when the death of Robespierre liberated a great number of prisoners.

XXXIV

THE REIGN OF TERROR AND CHRISTIANITY

ON March 14th, 1794, Robespierre appeared in the Convention for the first time after his serious illness, which had lasted for nearly a month.

Important events had taken place.

Hébert and his club had made themselves formidable, and were especially active against everything which remained of religion and Christianity in Paris and the departments.

At the beginning of the Revolution, attacks had been made at once against the clergy, as representing the First Estate. On the memorable night of August 4th, 1789, many of their privileges had been abolished, and their property confiscated for the benefit of the State, which now undertook to bear the cost of public worship.

And more was soon to follow.

All sects were placed on equal terms; the clergy were obliged to adopt citizenship, and the oath to the Constitution of 1791 became obligatory; those who refused—*prêtres refractaires, non-assermentés*—were forced to leave France. In addition to this, the civil marriage was instituted, by which the State took charge of the former functions of the Church. The hatred

against clergy and Church became more and more pronounced after the fall of Louis XVI. (August 10th, 1792),—largely caused by his veto on the law against refractory priests,—and likewise after the September massacres.

The Act dissolving clerical communities and monastic orders was followed by an edict, abolishing Sundays and Christian holidays (December 25th, 1792), which therefore became ordinary working days. This law displeased many, who, in spite of it, continued to keep the various days of rest as of old; and even in May 1793 Whitsuntide was secretly celebrated by a large number of the population. The dissatisfaction was particularly fostered by those to whom the new law meant pecuniary loss—namely, the dealers in flowers and everything connected with the toilet. Processions in the streets were prohibited, and thus remained within the church walls; the selling of clerical objects in public was forbidden, but despite everything the Catholic religion lived on in quiet. In June 1793 crucifixes were sold on the Pont-au-Change—to the north of la Cité, connecting the island with the Place du Châtelet of to-day; in Nanterre, the image of the Holy Virgin was adorned with tricoloured ribbons, in the hope that peace would soon be restored.

The chief opponents of the Church were Chaumette —*procureur syndic* of the Commune; Hébert, his substitute; the German baron, Anacharsis Cloots—pantheistic Republican, calling himself Orator of Mankind; General Vincent; the printer Momoro; the deputies, Bourdon de l'Oise, Rousselin, and Fouché. Anacharsis Cloots argued the most remarkably of

all: according to him the Christian religion should be abolished, because it was monotheistic; everything was full of Divinity; Nature was God, Mankind was God, the People itself was God; but the most god-like of all was Reason.

Through the exertions of these men, the Convention had instituted, by a decree of October 22nd—confirmed on November 24th, 1793—*le nouveau Calendrier républicain*—the work of Romme and Fabre d'Eglantine.

On the acceptance of this new Republican calendar, the old Catholic one was abolished. The decimal system was applied to the division of time, and the week of seven days was changed into a period of ten days, or décade, in which there was naturally no question of Sunday. Unfortunately the course of celestial bodies made it not only difficult, but impossible, to divide the year into ten months, and the authors were therefore obliged to adhere to the year of twelve months. These were divided into three decades of ten days each, and as new names became necessary, they were simply called *primidi*, *duodi*, *tridi*, etc.

The five remaining days of the year, which were thus left to be disposed of, were turned into days of festival, and received the name of Sansculottides: Festivals of Genius, Labour, Actions, Rewards, and Opinions, with a sixth Sansculottide for leap year, called Festival of the Revolution.

As all saints had been dismissed, every day of the new calendar was dedicated to a domestic animal, an agricultural product or implement, fruit, or vege-

table. The year began on September 22nd, and the names of the months were derived from the temperature and time of year. Therefore the autumn months were called Vendémiaire, Brumaire, and Frimaire—the months of Vintage, Fog, and Frost; those of the winter, Nivôse, Pluvôse, Ventôse—of Snow, Rain, and Wind; of the spring, Germinal, Floréal, and Prairial—of Buds, Flowers, and Meadows; of the summer, Messidor, Thermidor, and Fructidor—of Reaping, Heat, and Fruit; *dor* being Greek for gift.

In the circle of Chaumette and Hébert, and in the Commune, the new calendar was favourably received; and therefore, by a resolution of October 20th, 1793, the latter prohibited the closing of shops on the *ci-devant* Sundays and holidays, on pain of being declared "suspect." On every last day of the new week, or decadi—the Republican day of rest—it was allowable to close or open places of business at the pleasure of the owners.

In the month of November 1793 a fresh attack was made on religion and Christianity by Chaumette and Hébert, much against the wishes and opinions of Robespierre. The chief assailant was Hébert. This scoundrel, who was thrown up by the turbulent tide of the Revolution, had previously been an assistant at the Théâtre des Variétés—*controleur des sorties*—but was dismissed on account of bad conduct.

In 1789 he started a small newspaper—*le Père Duchène*—full of vulgar slang, without any moral tone; always ready to sell his pen to the highest bidder.

After August 10th, 1792, he was nominated substitute of Chaumette, and began to have some influence. During the rule of the Girondins, an eye was kept on him, and he was even arrested on account of his violence; but the judges acquitted him. He took the side of the Commune with firm, Sansculottic principles, and showed his dislike of the Convention and Committee.

He was not promoted to any high position in the Republic, and for this reason he detested the Committee, and envied Robespierre, but dared not openly attack the great orator of the Jacobins. His favourite idea was to strengthen the Commune, and to place it in a position strong enough to oppose the Committee. His influence in the Cordeliers Club, where he was protected by his friend, General Ronsin, was fairly great during the latter part of 1793. He was further supported by his friends, Mayor Pache and the Attorney Chaumette, and posed as an educated man.

As a fanatical atheist, he neglected no opportunity to strike a blow at the clergy; but to his credit it must be said that he exerted himself, with Chaumette, to suppress social scandals, immorality, and the trade in obscene books and prints; further, he punished those red-capped viragos who neglected their households and spoke in the women's clubs, and also forbade blood to be left flowing in the square after the executions. Except in his hatred of Church and religion, Anacharsis Cloots had nothing in common with Hébert. The German baron, who possessed a very large fortune, was a man of philosophical

acquirements, well read, and far superior in every respect to the coarse, superficial Hébert.

These, then, were the men who succeeded in causing a violent anti-religious fermentation in November 1793.

As the commissioners of the Convention agitated furiously in the departments against the priests, Paris itself did not wish to remain behind in this respect. The Terror made some of the clergy cowardly enough to leave their posts. For this reason, Cloots, Léonard Bourdon and Pereyra visited the Bishop of Paris; they overwhelmed him with proposals and requests, and persuaded him to renounce his office, and to testify before the Convention that he had ceased to be a Christian. The unfortunate bishop thought his life was in peril, and consented to everything.

Cloots communicated the result of this visit to the Commune, which decided to accompany the bishop and his clergy to the Convention.

On Thursday, November 7th, 1793, the Bishop of Paris, his vicars, and the members of the Parisian municipality, appeared at the bar of the Convention. Momoro—the chairman of the Commune, *pro tem.*—was their spokesman, and declared that the bishop and his assistants had been driven by the dictates of reason to make a solemn renunciation of their dignities. Gobel, the ex-bishop, delivered a short speech, which did not show great enthusiasm for his own action, and stated that he and his former colleagues had ceased to be Catholic priests; hereupon he handed the president, Laloi, the act of his nomination as bishop.

Several deputies, who were either priests or religious teachers, followed the same singular example: namely,

the priests Villers and Coupé; the Bishop of Evreux; Thomas Lindet; the Protestant clergyman, Julien de Toulouse.

There was only one who opposed this absurd procedure: the Bishop Grégoire, who emphatically declared in the assembly, that he would willingly renounce his income, but that the Convention had no right to assail the freedom of religion, which was entirely beyond their province.

Robespierre was silent during this remarkable scene. The Convention had resounded with jubilant applause; every one seemed satisfied. But he was well aware of the impression which these proceedings would cause outside France—and he feared for the future of the Republic.

XXXV

THE TRIUMPH OF REASON

WE have already remarked en passant on the short-lived victory of the Hébertists; and as Robespierre was afterwards reproached for his opposition to Hébertism, it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the true facts.

After the foolish proceedings in the Convention on November 7th, 1793, Chaumette appeared in the meeting of the Commune exclaiming: "A splendid sitting! Fanaticism is expiring; all the insignia (*titres*) of religious charlatanism have been laid on the tribune. All the ministers of every denomination abjure their errors and hold each other in fraternal embrace. We are regenerated. Nothing but the Law."

This referred to the unfortunate ex-prelate Gobel, who had not only placed his bishop's nomination on the table of the Convention, but also his ring and golden cross. Like Hébert, he was afterwards guillotined.

In the meeting of the Departmental Council similar remarks were made by Momoro and Lefiniel. The former stated: "The civil festival which will take place next week (decadi) in the Lycee des Arts must

be celebrated in the Metropolitan Church on the same day, when the musicians of the National Guards will sing patriotic hymns, and the statue of Liberty will be erected in place of the *ci-devante* Holy Virgin. Nothing but the Law." [1]

There was great joy in the forty-eight sections of Paris. Deputy Thuriot, a kind of Muscadin and enemy of Robespierre, appeared in the Assembly Hall of the Section des Tuileries—in the former rue Nicaisse, which led from la Place du Carrousel to the rue Saint-Honoré—and gave a report of the sitting of November 7th. This account made so great an impression that many of those present were moved to embrace him, such as the painters Reynault and Vernet, the banker Hermer, the actors Michot and Léger, the engraver Duplat, the doctor Souberbielle, and the bookseller Jansens. Lhuillier, the procureur to the Departmental Council, appeared shortly afterwards to invite the citizens to the festival of November 10th (20 Brumaire) which caused Thuriot to burst out: "Let us crush superstition and fanaticism with the laws of Nature." Such vague and hollow declarations were always to the taste of the citoyens, who took up the refrain: "Ecrasons."

Anarcharsis Cloots had immediately betaken himself to the Committee of Public Safety in the Tuileries, where he maintained that all had now been won: no more plots, no more scarcity of food. But the members of the Committee were disposed to be serious, and did not share in his joy.

Robespierre asked him what he meant.

[1] Georges Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots* (1865), II., p. 242.

Cloots answered: "I have induced Gobel to abdicate."

"You told us recently," replied Robespierre, "that we should conquer the Netherlands, restore to the people their independence, and treat them as brothers. . . . Why do you now seek to alienate the Belgians from us, by offending the prejudices to which you know they are attached?"

Cloots shrugged his shoulders and replied: "Oh, come, come, the evil has already been done. They have treated us as reprobates many and many a time."

Robespierre regarded the German baronial Sans-culotte with a penetrating look, and resumed:

"Yes, but until now they had no reasons, no facts. The true friends of the people will not be duped by your masquerades."[1]

And the Orator of Mankind slunk away without retaliating.

The Committee was unable to restrain the violent agitation caused by the Hébertists, and it was a further disappointment for Robespierre when Cloots was elected chairman of the Jacobins on the evening of November 9th, 1793. The following day the festival took place, which had been arranged by the Commune (Chaumette and Hébert) and the Conseil des Départements (Momoro and Lhuillier).

In many churches this fête was celebrated, but nowhere more uproariously than in Nôtre Dame de Paris. The Jacobins, Cordeliers, and the members of the Mountain, all of them wearing red caps, hastened to the principal church. Instead of solemn organ music,

[1] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 21 (1867).

a military orchestra accompanied the hundreds of voices which sang the Hymn to Liberty. The setting was by Gossec, and the words this time were written by Marie Joseph Chénier, and therefore much superior to the usual declamatory phrase-making of the Sansculotte poets:—

"Descends, ô Liberté! fille de la nature,
Le peuple a reconquis son pouvoir immortel:
Sur les pompeux débris de l'antique imposture,
Ses mains relèvent ton autel.

"Venez, vainqueurs des rois, l'Europe vous contemple
Venez, sur les faux dieux étendez vos succès;
Toi, sainte Liberté, viens habiter ce temple;
Sois la déesse des Français!

"Guerriers, libérateurs, race puissante et brave,
Armés d'un glaive humain, sanctifiez l'effroi!
Terrassé par vos coups, que le dernier esclave
Suive au tombeau le dernier roi!"

The singers were ranged round the spot where the altar had formerly stood, and this was now occupied by a kind of mound, on which a temple had been built bearing the inscription: *à la Philosophie.*

On a throne in front of this temple an actress was seated, called by many la citoyenne Maillard, by others, la citoyenne Aubry; but, according to every one, a "chef-d'œuvre de la Nature." She wore a white peplum, a blue mantle, and a red cap, and held in one hand a spear of ebony, in the other a burning torch. She was surrounded by white-robed chorus girls from the grand opera, who were singing the hymn of Chénier as they mounted and descended the artificial hill.

An overwhelming enthusiasm reigned supreme, for

a moment arrested by a fiery and patriotic speech from Chaumette. After this, the multitude proceeded to the Convention. The procession was led by the gunners of the national guards, who carried high in the air the mitre and surplice of the former bishop on the points of their lances. The members of the Commune followed, preceding the ladies of the chorus, whose loose hair was adorned with wreaths of roses, while they carried festoons of flowers in their hands. After them appeared the goddess Maillard, seated on a throne, which was decorated with holly and green boughs, and carried by the strong arms of four stalwart men of *la Halle*.

Jacobins, Cordeliers, and Moderates, fraternised with one another ; but, after all, only a small minority were taking active part in this performance,—most of the Parisians were inquisitive onlookers at the passing throng.

Arrived at the Tuileries, they were all admitted to "les honneurs de la séance." Chaumette introduced the Goddess of Liberty and Reason to the Convention as a "masterpiece of nature." Mademoiselle Maillard descended from her throne and took a seat of honour next to the president, where she was saluted by him and the secretaries with *le baiser fraternel*.

As Chaumette had opined that it was advisable to dedicate Nôtre Dame and other churches to Reason and Liberty, one of the members, Chabot, proposed to pass a motion to this effect ; the majority were in favour of this, and henceforth Nôtre Dame was called the Temple of Reason.

iot desired that the Convention should proceed

to the Temple de la Raison to hear once more the hymn to Liberty; this was agreed to, and towards evening the procession, followed by the majority of the Convention, again proceeded to Nôtre Dame to go through the ceremony for a second time. It is highly improbable that Robespierre was present, and not a few shared his dissatisfaction at these proceedings.

When Cloots and Fabre d'Eglantine met Bishop Gobel in the Tuileries Gardens in the evening, and congratulated him on the successful turn of affairs, they were startled by the loud voice of Renaudin, the lute-maker:

"You are bad citizens! *Vous n'êtes pas de bonne foi!*"

Renaudin was a supporter of Robespierre, and juror of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and, although no friend to the Catholic Church, he considered it distinctly imprudent, and very dangerous from a political point of view, to interfere with the liberty of conscience, or change their former uncompromising attitude for one of greater intolerance. The whole world would shrug its shoulders at the French Republic, as Paris herself had already done.

The publisher Momoro—vice-chairman *ad interim* of the Commune—allowed his wife to appear as Goddess of Reason in the church of Saint-André des Arts. When she was carried on her throne round the building, some one from the audience shouted: "*Que la déesse est maigre—Que la déesse est jaune!*" ("What a thin, what a yellow goddess!")[1]—and a great number ridiculed the whole performance.

[1] Georges Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots*, II. p. 251.

XXXVI

ROBESPIERRE AND ANACHARSIS CLOOTS

THE new religion of Reason gave rise to the most extravagant excesses, and most odious intolerance towards the priests and Christianity. When it became known that the members of the Convention had been present at the foolish proceedings invented by Chaumette and Hébert, millions of enemies were added to those already opposed to the Republic.

In the departments, and everywhere throughout the country, hundreds of farmers were indignant at the closing of the churches, while the women lamented the fact that their children could not be baptized; and the banished clergy secretly encouraged the hostility towards the Republic.

The Hébertists, in particular Hébert, Chaumette and Cloots, caused the Commune, or the Departmental Council of Paris, to pass all sorts of resolutions in their intoxication of joy over the new cult of Reason.

On November 23rd, 1793, the Commune ordered all churches to be closed, an example which was followed by the departments; and troops of raving Sansculottes revelled to their hearts' content in

breaking images, and particularly in destroying the coats of arms which were chiselled on the tombstones; everything of gold and silver which was found in the various places of worship was seized for the benefit of the Commune or State. After this purification the churches were turned into warehouses, to store large quantities of merchandise.

On November 17th the Commune had decided that all funerals should be under civil control. The corpses were removed from the houses by red-capped commissioners, to be buried quietly and without ceremony, and no relations or friends were admitted to this cheap interment.

Beyond France the indignation increased still more; whilst at home, those who sincerely loved their country complained bitterly of the ravings of these fanatics, who seemed to be in league with the enemy in placing the Republic in a suspicious light.

Robespierre was very indignant at the election of Cloots as chairman of the Jacobins. The war against religion and Church was fashionable for the time being, and just at that moment the Prussian baron had been elected. But at given times all members of the club were obliged to appear at the meeting to submit to "la rude épreuve de l'épuration," and Robespierre decided to call attention on that occasion to the many ambiguities in the political life of Cloots.

Anacharsis had run with every party from the beginning of the Revolution in 1789 to December 1793. He had come to Paris in his boyhood and had studied there; being a millionaire, he could live

independently. He had flattered the Girondins, and had made use of their influence to get himself elected a member of the Convention for the Department Seine-et-Oise.[1] He had been received as a friend at the house of the minister Roland, and had made good use of all that he had learnt there to throw suspicion on some of the Girondins. Afterwards, he wrote a pamphlet *Ni Roland, ni Marat*, and joined the Mountain. He renounced his name, Jean Baptiste, and, objecting to any other Christian name, took that of Anacharsis. This mysterious character, who posed as Orator of Mankind, was continually championing the Universal Republic. Robespierre thought it suspicious that he, more than any one, by his zeal against the Church, should make the French Republic ridiculous in the eyes of his compatriots the Prussians. There were several foreigners in Paris who distinguished themselves by Sansculottic zeal, but were really looked upon as spies. Cloots had exerted himself largely to free two Dutch bankers—the Van den Yvers—from the Committee of General Safety, who had taken charge of the fortune of Madame du Barry, the last mistress of Louis XVI., and had also sent large sums of money to *émigrés* abroad, for which they were sentenced to death and guillotined.

It was during the evening sitting of the Jacobin Club on December 12th, 1793, that Cloots and other members of the Convention had to submit to the ordinary purification test. Bourdon de l'Oise, Bentabolle, Reverchon, Borie, and Chaudron-Rousseau, were admitted first of all; after them came Billaud-Varenne,

[1] Ernest Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 265.

ANACHARSIS CLOOTS, THE ORATOR OF MANKIND. (*To face p.* 216.

who was received with general applause. But the following were refused: Coupé (de l'Oise), because he disapproved of the marriage of priests; Casabianca, because he had been a noble, and had not voted for the death of Louis XVI.; Duhem for having been a *ci-devant*, and failing to defend himself against various charges.

It seems remarkable that any one who disapproved of the marriage of priests was considered unfit to be a member of the Jacobin Club. But it should be borne in mind that, long before the Hébertist agitation, the Church had had to endure a great deal from the various legislative assemblies. As far back as February 13th, 1793, the Constituent Assembly had abolished the taking of monastic vows, and afterwards forty monasteries in Paris had been thrown open. The Augustins, Barnabites, Bernardins, Capucins, Celestins, Carthusians, Cordeliers, Jacobins, and others, had emerged from their solitude into the wicked Revolutionary world, and become ordinary citizens; they shaved their beards, wore long trousers, and many of them married.

Only the aged and decrepit monks were left behind. But the nuns did not so soon flee from their retreats. The inhabitants of the sixty convents in Paris did their utmost to remain true to their mission, and to live on quietly in spite of the unfavourable times. But they did not always succeed, and some of them were driven into the tumultuous Paris of the Revolution, either by their own inclinations, or chased from their cells by the Sansculottic patriots. Many priests and nuns made proper use of their liberty to marry;

and a deputy like Coupé, who disapproved of this, was ejected from the Jacobin Club.

On the same evening Robespierre also had to submit to the "purification test." When he came forward he was received with loud applause, and, as it was considered superfluous to examine him, he resumed his seat at the foot of the tribune at once. After him it was the turn of Cloots.

Fourcroy, a chemist, was chairman that evening, and asked, as was usual, for the name and native place of Cloots. He replied: "I was born at Cleves, in the future department of Rhine and Meuse. As to my moral cradle, this was the University of Paris, to which I came at the age of eleven; I am thirty-eight years old now, and have therefore been a Parisian for twenty-seven years." The president inquired about his life before the Revolution. "I was a free, independent man, a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the Universe; I was always in horror of the Masters of Earth and Heaven." No one brought a charge against him, and the examination seemed at an end, when an unknown voice was heard: "I would like to be enlightened about his relations with the Van den Yvers. I am more or less of a spy (*mouchard*) by profession."[1]

Cloots remained unabashed, and stated that the Van den Yvers had been his bankers, but that religious and political disputes had been the cause of terminating their connection. After this Robespierre rose and asked:

"Can we regard a Prussian baron as a patriot?

[1] Georges Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots*, II., p. 295.

Can we look upon a man with an income of more than a hundred thousand livres as a Sansculotte? Can we accept one who only associates with bankers and the counter-Revolutionary enemies of France as a Republican? No, Citizens! Let us be on our guard against foreigners who desire to appear more patriotic than Frenchmen themselves."

There would be some justification for the statement that Robespierre tried to throw suspicion on Cloots in an unfair way, by calling attention to his fortune. But he was certainly not in error when he pointed out that Cloots had shown himself a friend of all parties, an admirer of Dumouriez; had courted the Girondins, had disdained the title of French citizen by his strange conduct, and had professed to be a citizen of the world, who desired to seduce France into a war with all Europe by his chimera of a World's Republic.

Robespierre reproached him in particular for his participation in the foolish performance with Bishop Gobel, and continued: "We have seen this bishop presenting himself at the bar of the Convention to offer his resignation. Eh! Cloots! We know of your nocturnal visits and plots. We know that you have purposely prepared this philosophical masquerade with Gobel. You foresaw the disastrous results which such proceedings might give rise to, and for that reason they would please our enemies above all." Amidst loud applause it was decided that all former nobles, foreigners, and bankers, should be expelled from the club. Cloots was therefore ejected. Robespierre was right in warning the members against

the dangerous fanaticism of the Orator of Mankind, but not justified in making him out a traitor. The history of those days has taught us that Cloots was a fanatic; but he was sincere, and acted in good faith.

XXXVII

ROBESPIERRE AND THE HÉBERTISTS

IT has been clearly demonstrated that Robespierre and the majority in the Committee of Public Safety were far from pleased with the reckless conduct of the Hébertists.

Chaumette, Hébert, Momoro, Vincent, Ronsin, and Cloots, formed the extreme left of the Mountain—"*les enragés*." Their writings, speeches, and actions, had exposed France to the ridicule of Europe. In December 1793 Robespierre had been responsible for the ejection of the world-citizen Cloots from the Jacobin Club. At the beginning of 1794 his indisposition had prevented his interference with the Government. But in March he reappeared. There was much that gave him reason for grave concern.

Many commissioners of the Convention, who had been sent to the provinces, had acted like true Hébertists. In the Department de l'Ain and du Mont-Blanc, for example, a hundred and sixty-three priests had been forced to abjure their faith and renounce their office. He judged rightly that this absurd intolerance would only result in making martyrs of the clergy, and this was one of the reasons why he feared a similar agitation of the citizens against everything religious.

The language adopted by Hébert, in his journal

le Père Duchêne, exceeded the limits of all that was most coarse and revolting. The words "Let us exterminate without mercy" appeared frequently, accompanied with, "by the virtue of the holy guillotine," or, "To heat my furnaces, it is plain that I want live coal."

Everybody in Paris who was conservatively or moderately inclined united in savage hatred against Hébert; and as the Jacobins also turned their backs on this ultra-Revolutionist, he betook himself, with his friends, to the Cordelier Club, where Danton, Camille Desmoulins, and Hérault-Séchelles had once reigned supreme.

This club was various in its nature, and contained many members of every political opinion, on the ground of their general dislike to the Jacobins, and also because they detested the rigid gravity of Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon. With them were the viveurs, topers, and gormandisers, such as Danton and De Cock, the great friend of Hébert.

Hébert tried to invent something against the hated Jacobins, and even thought to create a rebellion with some thousands from the back streets, all of them red-capped and bare-footed. His colleagues in the club were continually bringing fresh charges against the Jacobins; and on February 12th, 1794, for example, the printer Momoro announced, with great disgust, that the excellent citizen Vincent had been expelled from the Jacobin Club.

On February 26th, 1794, Saint-Just brought a report before the Convention, in which he called attention to the restlessness of the ultra Revolutionists. In the

meeting of the Cordeliers, this charge was replied to by a childish procedure—namely, by throwing a black veil over the tablet on which the "Rights of Man and the Citizen" had been painted. A rabid speech was indulged in by Vincent; likewise by Carrier, the Nero of Nantes, who had been recalled as Commissioner of the Convention on the proposal of Robespierre:

"I see and I feel"—he said—"that they desire to retard the progress of the Revolution. . . . The Monsters! They would gladly break down scaffolds if they could; but let us never forget, citizens, that the men who do not want the guillotine are only those who feel that they are worthy of it. An insurrection, a holy insurrection—with this you ought to oppose these scoundrels."

And Hébert repeated loudly: "*L'insurrection! Oui, l'insurrection!*" [1]

These rebellious cries alone would have been sufficient to arrest Hébert; but there was something more. The insurrection which was alluded to here had really been concocted by him in secret with the aid of Vincent and Ronsin. And this was proved on the evidence of Dr. Souberbielle—well known for his unassailable honesty and truthfulness—who held the post of juryman at the Revolutionary Tribunal; he died in 1846, at the age of ninety, and until his last moments was a great admirer of Robespierre. Souberbielle related to a friend [2] that

[1] *Moniteur*, March 7th, 1794 (17 Ventôse an II.).

[2] P. Duplan, who communicated this to E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 425.

after the sitting of the Convention he was accosted by Vincent and Ronsin in the Tuileries gardens, and invited to a café in the rue Richelieu; here they informed the doctor of the plan by which they had arranged to establish in every department a small Revolutionary army and some artillery, with two cannons; also to draw up new lists of suspects, arrest them, and crowd them into the various prisons of the departments. On a fixed date these Revolutionary armies were to force their way into the prisons, and massacre both men and women without exception.

Souberbielle went the same evening to Robespierre, who was still indisposed, but convalescent, and informed him of the murderous plan of Vincent and Ronsin. He was astounded at their audacity, and exclaimed, as he paced excitedly up and down his room:

"The Revolution has indeed a terrible aspect. . . . Always blood. . . . Has not enough been spilt already? Must the Republic, then, devour itself?" . . .

The Convention, as well as the Jacobins, was bitterly opposed to the rebellious movement of the Cordeliers. Collot d'Herbois had already declared his disapproval in the Jacobin Club. On March 13th, 1794, Saint-Just spoke in the Convention regarding the conspiracies which were set on foot by traitors—particularly by foreigners—against the Republic.

On the same day Vincent, Ronsin, Momoro, and Hébert were arrested. Robespierre, who reappeared on March 14th in the meetings of the Convention and Committee, had probably acquainted his colleagues with the schemes of Vincent and Ronsin. This is

evident from the statement of Saint-Just, and also from a remark made by Billaud-Varenne the same evening in the Jacobin Club :

"Those base individuals meditated the slaughter of patriots, and a part of the Revolutionary army was set aside for that purpose. There remains therefore no doubt whatever as to the real projects of the Hébertist faction." [1]

But the Convention had yet further proofs of their guilt. Letters had been intercepted, written by foreigners in Paris to their friends abroad. Robespierre referred to these in the sitting of March 14th. The following is an extract from one of them :

"No doubt or delusion is possible ; two parties exist, whose efforts tend to dismember France. The Committee of Public Safety, which desires to preserve her authority, enjoys great confidence, and is surrounded and supported by the Jacobins, who are guided by Robespierre ; and, by strengthening the laws and public morals, it labours to direct the Revolutionary Government and establish it on a regular basis. To the other party belong Hébert and Vincent ; but these men are but lending their names."

Foreigners also seemed to think that Vincent and Ronsin were no more than common intriguers and that Robespierre and the Jacobins formed the unwavering support of the French Republic.

It was therefore to the interest of the enemies of the Republic to undermine the authority of Robespierre as far as possible ; and Couthon, who had

[1] *Moniteur*, March, 18th, 1794 (25 Ventôse an II.).

likewise just recovered from his illness, referred to this at the same sitting.

Another letter ran as follows :

"The two parties, of which I have spoken to you before, are being formed ; they are measuring their forces, and very soon will come to blows. There is a tendency to make Robespierre unpopular, but, of all men, his reputation is most difficult to destroy."

After this statement it was naturally impossible to remain inactive, and it was necessary to guard against Hébertism. Anacharsis Cloots, the banker De Cock, and some others, had already been arrested.

And now occurred what is called by historians *un procès politique* (political trial). Since Louis XVI. had been sentenced to death on political grounds, and the Girondins—genuine martyrs to their convictions—had been sent to the scaffold, a political trial could not end without death-sentences. The Hébertists were doomed to die, although men like Cloots and De Cock deserved a better fate. But now the Dantonists were soon to follow, and a little later the flower of the Jacobin Club was likewise to perish.

XXXVIII

THE TRIAL OF THE HÉBERTISTS

DURING the months of January, February, and March, 1794, the authority of the Committee of Public Safety, the influence of the Jacobins, and the popularity of Robespierre, had considerably increased. At the same time the importance of *les enragés* had declined greatly, while daily the general discontent had become more and more pronounced at the language and conduct of Hébert.

Robespierre persuaded the Committee to recall all commissioners of Hébertist inclinations from the departments, and therefore Fouché and Collot d'Herbois returned from Lyons, after having committed the most unheard-of atrocities in that unfortunate city; Barras and Fréron were summoned from Marseilles, Carrier from Nantes, and Tallien from Bordeaux. We have already shown how these rascals secretly conspired against the Committee, and against Robespierre in particular. Meanwhile, a certain change could be observed in public opinion.

During the first three months of 1794, a party had come to the front which was called "les modérés," or "les indulgents." To them belonged: Danton, who, notwithstanding his boldness, was extremely unprincipled, and for that reason brought by his

friends to the new club; Fabre d'Eglantine, the joint-author with Romme of the Republican calendar, and suspected of financial corruption; Lecointre of Versailles; and Légendre, the popular butcher, who desired a national fast on account of the short supplies of cattle; Merlin de Thionville, who, as deputy in the field, had fought bravely at the Rhine, but was responsible for a deficiency in the military treasury; Bourdon de l'Oise, the coward, who was in great terror of Robespierre; Tallien, deeply concerned about the fate of Thérézia Cabarrus; Bazire and Chabot, financial reprobates; lastly, Camille Desmoulins, to whose easy conscience and exceptional light-heartedness the stern logic and morality of Robespierre were far from congenial.

The "indulgents" were chiefly opposed to the Hébertists, and likewise to the Committee of Public Safety, but they did not dare to attempt an attack on the latter.

Camille Desmoulins played a remarkable part in this struggle. He began with creating a new journal, *Le Vieux Cordelier*, in which he proposed to replace *la Justice du Peuple*—the Revolutionary Tribunal—by a Committee of Clemency. For this proposition the Jacobins wished to expel him from their club; but Robespierre interfered on his behalf until the indignation caused by his writings rose so high that it became impossible to save him. Camille was greatly embittered against Hébert, as was plain from the sixth number of his journal, from which the following is an extract:

"I do not intend here to attack you with churlish abuse and mere words, but with simple facts. I shall

denounce you as I have denounced Brissot, and society shall judge between you and me." And Camille, continuing, asked him if the name Committee of Clemency had affected him like "the scourge of the Furies"? "Are you unable to bear the idea that the people should one day become happy and a nation of brothers? And because this word 'clemency' has enraged you to such a degree as to deprive you of your reason, you have even gone to the length of charging me ridiculously with marrying a rich wife. You dare to speak of my fortune—you, who, as all Paris knows, were a ticket-collector at the door of the Variétés Théâtre but two years since, when you were kicked out, for reasons which you cannot have forgotten. You dare to speak of my 4000 livres income—you, who, as a Sansculotte, with your false wig, with your hypocritical sheet, have received 100,000 francs as a salary from the minister Bouchotte for the support of your official counter-Revolutionary journal; you, who, as a Sansculotte, live in a house furnished as luxuriously as that of any 'suspect'—all of which I am about to prove."

The sharp attack was fully deserved, but brought forth what was not desirable for Camille: general satisfaction among those who were of royalist or reactionary tendencies, and who gave unmistakable utterance to their joy. Camille hinted at the rumour that the former minister Bouchotte had secretly paid large sums to the editor of *le Père Duchêne*.

Nobody took the part of the Hébertists on their arrest; even the citoyennes de la Halle detested Hébert.

Of the forty-eight sections only one, la section de Marat, appeared in the Commune to complain of the procedure, but was not received with much sympathy. The Committee also took care that the true delinquents of the "indulgent" party should be apprehended, and the same day the following were consigned to gaol: Fabre d'Eglantine, one of Danton's friends, Chabot and Bazire, who were accused of financial irregularities, and Julien de Toulouse, a former clergyman.

On March 16th, Hérault-Séchelles, another friend of Danton, was arrested on the charge that, as a member of the Committee, he had betrayed government secrets to the Austrian Proly, a natural son of the Prince of Kaunitz.[1] Besides this, an *émigré* had been discovered at the residence of Hérault-Séchelles by the agents of the Section Lepelletier—the district on the left bank of the Seine, bordered on the north by the large outer boulevard, and by the rue Neuve de Petits Champs on the south.

The arrest of Hérault-Séchelles was sanctioned by the Convention. Ronsin, the general of Chaumette's little Revolutionary army, was arrested and taken to the prison Saint-Lazare, where he found his friend Anacharsis Cloots, who appeared quite gay and fearless, and said to him: "Be calm! We must gain time! Public opinion will change, and the patriots will be delivered!"[2]

Cloots, who was really innocent, had already drawn up an unpublished apology for his actions entitled:

[1] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 453.
[2] Georges Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots*, II., p. 439.

Lettre de Cloots aux membres du Comité de la Sureté générale,—of which he had been a member.

On March 19th, both were conducted from Saint-Lazare to the Conciergerie, to be tried with the other Hébertists. Nineteen were brought together for this renowned political trial—firstly, Hébert, Ronsin, Vincent and Momoro; further some Cordeliers, friends of this quartet: Hubert-Leclerc, Charles Bourgeois Mazuel, aide-de-camp of Ronsin, Dueroquet and Ancar, two of the noisiest members of the Cordelier Club; thirdly, some shady diplomatists, Desfieux, Pereyra Dubuisson and Proly, almost all friends of Danton; fourthly, three royalists, General Laumur, Dr. Armand, and Mme. Quétineau; lastly, and most unjustly, Anacharsis Cloots and le bel Hollandais the banker De Cock.

The charge against Cloots was ridiculous. He was accused of having plotted against the liberty of the French people and the national representation, of having intended to overthrow the Republican Government and to replace it by the monarchy; it was also asserted that he had conspired to open the prisons, with the purpose of surrendering the national representatives and the people to the fury of the liberated felons. His witty and able biographer Georges Avenel remarks, quite justly: "They did not accuse him of having removed the clock-towers of Notre Dame, and yet that would have been more reasonable."

At the last moment the circle of accused Hébertists received an addition—namely, the military doctor Laboureau, who had proposed, in the Cordeliers Club, a day after their arrest, to appoint some one to undertake the defence of their friends.

The leaders of the "enragés" were indeed surprised to find, amongst their fellow-prisoners, such men as Pereyra, Dubuisson, and Proly, who belonged to the race of diplomatic traitors, and had followed the example of Dumouriez. Cloots maintained that they intended to strike at him as the father of "*l'idée parisienne cosmopolite*," but he had unwavering confidence in the future.

XXXIX

THE TRIAL OF THE HÉBERTISTS (II)

THE administration of justice by the Tribunal was extremely arbitrary and fantastic. Political offences were entirely outside the domain of common law, and were always regarded as attempts made against the success of the Revolution, as threats directed against the common weal.

La Justice du Peuple—the Revolutionary Tribunal—was bound to punish these crimes as promptly and as severely as possible. Sometimes whole groups of prisoners, accused of quite different crimes, were brought up together for trial, this alone indicating the illegal and tyrannous nature of the sentences.

Of the nineteen Hébertists who were to be tried, only half belonged to the real club of Hébert.

Four members of the Convention, all Danton's friends, Desfieux, Pereyra, Dubuisson, and Proly, were brought up for trial in company with the Hébertists, for having connived with Dumouriez, when sent on a mission to this traitor in March 1792. Besides these, three Royalists, amongst them Madame Quétineau, and two foreigners—Anacharsis Cloots and Henri de Cock—were placed in the dock with the Hébertists.

At nine o'clock in the morning of March 21st, 1794, the nineteen accused persons were conducted to the Salle de la Liberté in the Palais de Justice. The doors being closed, only a small number of the public could obtain admittance; but outside, on the square in front of the court, were crowds of surging Sansculottes, mainly Hébertists, whose loud cries could easily be heard in the court-room.

Five judges and a jury of thirteen were to administer the law; but from the latter the prisoners expected most: they were respectable citizens, who would pronounce judgment in accordance with the voice of their conscience, in spite of the dangers with which their post of honour as jurors threatened them. They were mostly strict Jacobins, who dared not decline this perilous vocation; one of them—citizen Antonelle—had sent in his resignation as juryman, and had now been arrested on suspicion of treason.

It was evident, from the facts that the Committee had taken extraordinary measures, that the public had not been admitted, and that the accused were not allowed to be officially defended, that the utmost severity would be exercised.

The Hébertists had made themselves generally hated by all parties. Vincent, Ronsin, and Momoro, knew that their lives were in danger. Hébert looked unprincipled, cowardly, and uneasy.

Many witnesses were heard, and proved the guilt of Dumouriez' accomplices in particular.

General Westermann, one of Danton's friends, well known for his bravery in the Vendée, bore witness

against the Dutchman De Cock, and from his evidence it appeared that the latter had acted as representative of the Dutch patriotic fugitives since 1787, had fought with Westermann against the rebels in the Vendée, had spent with his compatriots a sum of four hundred and twenty thousand livres since 1791 to supply the French armies with food-stuffs; but that he was a great friend of Hébert, and that he had been aware of Dumouriez' plans.[1]

Against Vincent, Ronsin, and Momoro, many serious allegations were made. Vincent, who was also accused of theft, replied to all questions with ill-suppressed rage. Dumas, the president, asked him if Chaumette likewise belonged to this conspiracy; to which he responded: "*Il attend, qu'on l'y mette*," and addressed the jury: "I beg of you, citoyens, not to conclude from these words that I acknowledge the accusation! Nothing has been proved yet!"

The Hébertists claimed loudly what the law allowed them—namely, some one official to defend them. Momoro wished to read his written defence; but Ronsin shouted across at him: "This is a political trial! We have to die!" and exclaimed a little later: "The party which is sending us to death will follow us in turn, and it will not be long"—a prophecy soon to be fulfilled.

During the third day of the hearing, the doors of the court were again opened, and a mixed crowd entered, among them many Jacobins, who loudly hooted Hébert on his appearance.

It was alleged against him that he had preached

[1] Georges Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots*, II., p. 453.

rebellion; but Hébert threw this accusation upon Carrier, who, strangely enough, was still at liberty, a fact which he owed, according to many contemporary accounts, to the still powerful influence of Danton.

The public prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville, read from *le Père Duchène* some phrases which clearly proved Hébert's hostility towards the Convention and the Committees. He had written:

"The counter-Revolution will take place if the Committee of Public Safety is left as it is to-day." "The Revolutionary Tribunal has two kinds of weights and measures. The judges and the committees can be bribed." At another place: "Les scélérats qui nous gouvernent sont les devorateurs de la substance publique . . . !"

On hearing his own words, Hébert's countenance became so livid with rage that some one exclaimed: "His face tells against him. It shows his guilt."

Cloots awaited the judgment of the jury with the greatest confidence. On the fourth day of the trial he was accused of having spoken in favour of some *émigrés*, while Fouquier-Tinville hurled at him the charge of having written to the enemies of the Republic the letters which had been seen on the table of the Prussian general Kalkreuth.

One of the jurors—le luthier Rénaudin—a friend of Robespierre, whose annoyance at the follies in connection with the Goddess of Reason has already been remarked on, interrupted with the words: "Your theory of the universal Republic was a deeply schemed trea[illegible]ery, which has been one of the causes of the [illegible]tion of crowned heads against France!"

And some of the public shouted : " To the guillotine with the Prussian ! "

On March 24th, 1794, the president asked the jury whether they had been sufficiently informed. As they replied in the affirmative, the prisoners were then removed from the Hall of Liberty, and the jurors retired to deliberate. At twelve o'clock they re-appeared in the court-room, and every member had to reply in a loud voice to the questions asked by the judges. The nineteen accused were unanimously declared guilty, upon which Fouquier-Tinville demanded death-sentence according to the law of March 10th, 1793 (institution of the Tribunal).

Loud expostulations on the part of the prisoners were heard throughout the court. " I am pregnant ! " cried the unfortunate Madame Quétineau. " I appeal from your verdict to mankind, but, like Socrates, I will drink the hemlock (*la ciguë*) with pleasure," exclaimed Anacharsis, above all the noise.

Cloots had become a martyr for his ideas—" Paris, France, Universe ! "—and for his theory of a world republic, which he had preached with the enthusiasm and fervour of a religious reformer. Till the last moment he remained calm, and proudly awaited his death.

At one o'clock in the afternoon the presiding judge, Dumas, pronounced the death-sentence upon all of them. This caused great joy in Paris, and it was intended to play a practical joke, suggested by Camille Desmoulins. Le Père Duchêne had called himself *marchand de fourneaux*, and, at his execution, stoves were to be carried in front of the guillotine-carts. In

the afternoon the streets where the tumbrils had to pass were thronged with dense crowds of jubilant people. As they were starting for this last dread journey, Hébert remarked: "Oh, it is all over with the Republic now;" but Ronsin replied: "Elle est immortelle."

The public hissed and insulted Hébert to such an extent that he burst into tears. Cloots was likewise hooted—"Prussian spy!"—but his impassive smile never left him; he was not afraid of death.

Sarcastic songs were sung by the mob:

"Adieu, projets! adieu ma Jaqueline!
Innocemment j'ai voulu m'agrandir,
Pour récompense, on va me raccourcir,
J'ai cru regner,—et l'on me guillotine!"

On their arrival at the Place de la Révolution, the Batavian De Cock was the first to be guillotined, after him the Hébertists, and the friends of Dumouriez. It is said that the executioner Sanson expressly withheld the knife, when Hébert was stretched upon the machine, to increase the pangs of death of the unfortunate.

Anacharsis Cloots was the last. Looking to the white monument of Freedom close by the scaffold, he bowed his head as a salute to Liberty, first to the right, to the left, and then in front. The same evening this greeting was imitated by the Parisian Muscadins, who called it:

"Saluer à la prussienne!"

XI.

DARKNESS CLOSES ROUND DANTON

OTHER political trials were to follow after the disappearance of the Hébertists. The savage braggarts, the innocent fanatics, the friends of Dumouriez, had bowed their heads under the knife of the guillotine, but there were still some friends of Dumouriez to be disposed of: these were journalists like Camille Desmoulins, who, with his biting witticisms in *le Vieux Cordelier* had excited the utmost indignation in the Committee of Public Safety, particularly enraging Collot d'Herbois, Billaud-Varenne, and Barère.

The club of the "Indulgents" was practically led by Danton, and had already been attacked in the arrest of Fabre d'Eglantine, Julien de Toulouse, Chabot, and Bazire. This quartet was sent to gaol on March 14th, and followed three days after by Hérault-Séchelles, whose handsome appearance and charming manners could not atone for his political sins.

Dangers were gathering round Danton. It was distinctly a threat against him to arrest his friends Fabre and Hérault.

Many offences have been laid to his account which he never committed, and this is clearly proved by Dr. Robinet in *Le Procès des Dantonistes d'après les*

documents, etc. (1879) and other works[1] on the life of Danton. Still, he committed many political errors, which made him an easy prey for his enemies.

Danton was a very influential man, and his rapid fall was therefore all the more surprising. He was no ordinary person, and in all respects towered high above his fellow-men. In regard to his appearance, he might be compared with the Hercules of the circus, of superhuman strength, who lifts heavy weights with his teeth; with his enormous head, resting on huge square shoulders, his repulsive face, terribly disfigured through an attack of small-pox in his boyhood;[2] his gashed upper lip, deformed from his infancy; his restless, glittering eyes; his thundering voice, which made itself heard above the din of the noisiest assemblies; his long, black, and powderless hair; . . . he gave the impression of some ferocious animal rather than a human being.

He dressed respectably, but always looked untidy, and did not altogether follow the Sansculotte fashions. He generally wore a light brown or dark red frock-coat and culottes, but his linen was dirty and creased.

Danton was of good family: his father had been an advocate at Arcis sur Aube, where Georges Jacques Danton was born on October 6th, 1759. He studied law, and started his career as a solicitor's clerk. In 1787 he bought himself a "charge d'avocat aux conseils," and married in Paris the daughter of a

[1] Also acknowledged by one of the most able historians of the French Revolution, Georges Avenel, in his *Lundis Révolutionnaires* (1875), dealing with *La Vie privée de Danton* of Robinet (1865).

[2] *Danton: par G. Lennox*, 1878, p. 12.

DANTON

(*La face p.* 29.)

well-to-do restaurant-keeper, who brought him twenty thousand francs as a dowry. As he had inherited houses and property from his parents, he was considered a man of means. From the beginning of the Revolution this athletic lawyer made his voice heard. At the outset he was president of one of the sixty election-committees in the district of the Cordeliers, out of which the Cordelier Club grew, where Danton became conspicuous for his passionate eloquence. He took part in all the important events, and carried the masses with him by his astounding audacity and his imposing appearance. His thundering voice seemed to terrify the timid members of his club or the Convention; his effrontery was boundless, and when it was necessary he spoke the language of a cab-driver. He was fond of good living and luxury, and addicted to the pleasures of the table; and when his belongings were sealed, after his arrest, three barrels and a hundred and fifty bottles of the best wines were found in his cellar.[1]

He lived in his own house, in the rue des Cordeliers, not far from the Luxembourg, of which he occupied six rooms on the "*belle étage*"; and from the inventory taken after the death of his first wife, it appeared that these apartments were most luxuriously furnished. No wonder that the strict Jacobin, Saint-Just, once asked him; "D'où vient ce faste qui t'entoure?"[2] In addition to this residence, he possessed a country house near Paris, which he had inherited from his parents.

[1] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 459.
[2] *Danton: par G. Lenôtre*, p. 51

It has often been asserted that he had accepted money from Mirabeau for the defence of the king; that he had appropriated the funds of the State when he was sent as commissioner of the Convention to Belgium; that he had enriched himself in 1792, when he was for a short time Minister of Justice: but his able defender, Dr. Robinet, has distinctly proved that these charges were mere fabrications.

To his disadvantage, however, it may be said that he always attempted to benefit himself if the course of Revolutionary events gave him an opportunity to do so. He was not wise in the selection of his companions; he fraternised with Philippe Egalité to share his luxurious feasts, and used all his influence to have his hospitable friend elected as member of the Convention. He was accused of participation in the September massacres of 1792, a point on which he always remained silent. Every one knew that he had used all his power during that year to call the Convention together as soon as possible, and to proclaim the Republic. He exerted himself for the institution of the Committee of Public Safety, of which he had only been a member for a short time, and also assisted in establishing the Revolutionary Tribunal.

His views on foreign politics were influenced by his sympathy with England.[1] He was secretly a peace-advocate, and consequently directly opposed to Robespierre, Carnot, and Saint-Just, and in this respect the Committee always felt itself threatened.

Danton wished for an armistice with England, and then a temporary recognition of the French Republic

[1] George Avenel, *Lundis Révolutionnaires*, p. 248 (1875).

by her great neighbour ; and he was therefore wholly at one with Fox, the leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons at that time.

Georges Avenel points out the entirely different opinions held by Danton and Robespierre, and says rightly :

"It is also clear that Robespierre had a great love for power, and that this tendency, which is very natural in a man of thirty, made him regard himself as indispensable. As to Danton, if he was especially in haste to be at the head of affairs and take Robespierre's place, it was only to treat for the peace of which he seemed assured."

In 1793 Lord Wycombe and Fox insisted in the House of Commons on opening negotiations for peace with the Jacobin government ; but Pitt had the satisfaction of seeing Fox's proposal rejected by two hundred and seventy-seven votes against fifty-nine.[1]

A few weeks later Barère agitated strongly in the Convention for war *à outrance*, with Pitt's government and the English nation. Danton naturally drew suspicion on himself in the Committee by his foreign policy. His principal opponent was Billaud-Varenne, who already proposed to arrest him, as early as January 1794. Amidst the deep silence which followed this demand in the Committee, Robespierre only indignantly opposed this, and reproached Billaud for his designs against the best patriots.

And of this incident Billaud availed himself, on 9 Thermidor, to attack Robespierre. He called Danton

[1] Georges Avenel, *Lundis Révolutionnaires*, p. 249.

a conspirator for having sent Fabre d'Eglantine to Dumouriez, during his short period as minister, and when the latter allowed the Prussians to withdraw unmolested, although he could easily have crushed the enemy.

XLI

ROBESPIERRE ABANDONS DANTON

IN January 1794 Robespierre had warmly defended Danton, but shortly afterwards he surrendered to the influence of his colleagues in the Committee, and left him to his fate.

What, then, could be his grounds for believing so renowned a Republican to be guilty of high treason?

There had been brilliant moments in Danton's life. At the outset, his rough but great eloquence in the Cordelier Club had been the admiration of every one, and a little later he became one of the most notorious leaders of the Revolutionary events. In 1790 (November 24th) he was appointed commander of a battalion of national guards in the Cordeliers district, and two months afterwards he was elected member of the Departmental Council of Paris. After the sad and tragical arrest of the king at Varennes, Danton accused Lafayette, the commander-in-chief of the Parisian National Guards, of having assisted the royal family to escape. Lafayette charged Danton later, in his Memoirs, with having accepted ninety thousand livres from the Court for his services as spy among the Jacobins; but it has been clearly proved that this statement was a mere fabrication, and several of his latest biographers have confirmed this.

After his death it appeared that he possessed about the same capital and property as at the time of his first marriage.

Danton was complicated with Camille Desmoulins in the "affaire" of the Champ-de-Mars on July 17th, 1791. They had prepared a petition to the National Assembly, and invited all the Parisian electors to sign this solemnly on the Champ-de-Mars. In this document they maintained that Louis XVI., after his arrest at Varennes (June 21st, 1791), was no more worthy to rule. The petition was decidedly Revolutionary, but this did not prevent thousands of electors from hurrying to the Champ-de-Mars to sign it. The papers for signature were placed on the altar of the nation, which had been erected for solemn national festivals. Two vagabonds had been discovered in the morning, underneath this altar, who were suspected of evil intentions, and the mob at once administered justice to the two unfortunates, whose heads were soon carried round on pikes. But for that incident everything was quiet and orderly, and thousands had already signed their names when Lafayette, and Bailly, the Mayor of Paris, thought it advisable to put an end to this performance, and surprised and attacked the petitioners with troops of infantry and artillery. The mob returned this unexpected interference by hurling stones and other missiles at the troops, to which Lafayette responded with a salvo from his soldiers, which left fifty corpses on the Champ-de-Mars.

As the military commander of Paris would not tolerate anything illegal, a momentary panic struck the leaders of the Revolutionary movement. Danton

hid himself for a short time at the residence of his father-in-law at Fontenay-sous-bois, but soon returned to the capital, and was elected to the post of substitut-adjoint du Procureur de la Commune.

He took a leading part in the movement of June 20th, 1792, when all Paris thronged into the Tuileries, to force the king to accept the law of the Legislative Assembly against refractory priests, and also to recall the dismissed Roland ministry. After June 20th came the fall of the monarchy on August 10th. On August 12th the *Moniteur* announced the nomination of Danton as Minister of Justice, together with Roland, Clavière, and Servan. But in the early part of October he resigned, as the Convention decided at its first sittings to exclude ministers from the membership. He preferred to remain in the Convention, and therefore sent in his resignation as minister.

According to the evidence of Cambon, the financial expert of the Convention, he had to dispose of a sum of four hundred thousand livres during his short time of office. But this amount was duly accounted for by Danton, as his biographer, Robinet, has clearly proved from official documents.

As minister, he did little to check the ghastly murders of September in the prisons of Paris. The defeat of the French army in the north, and the capture of Verdun by the Prussians, caused a panic which was followed by the savage fury of the raving Sansculottes, resulting in the forcible entrance of the prisons, where, in their opinion, noblemen and priests were plotting to assist the enemy in entering Paris.

His apathy and inactivity as Minister of Justice during these horrible massacres would later be construed into a very serious charge against him.

After the taking of Verdun he strongly advocated the general conscription. With reference to this, the celebrated historian Michelet has described an incident between Danton and some Parisian women.

Michelet began this scene with the words "On nous a raconté," hardly a reliable guarantee. Some savage viragoes, whose husbands and sons had been forced to leave for the army, met Danton in the street, and accused him as the cause of it all in bitter and abusive language. In spite of this, however, Danton was seized with great compassion. "Danton avait beaucoup de cœur," says Michelet.[1] He mounted some steps, and addressed them with still coarser language.

"Danton was above all things a male; he had something of the lion and mastiff in him, but also much of a wild bull. The women were terrified at the vigour and coarseness of his words, at the force of his voice, at his savage appearance and flaming eyes. He told them that they had not given birth to their sons for their own benefit, but for the support of their country. With moist eyes he referred to the disasters which had fallen on France. These women," Michelet continued, "could not control themselves; they wept over France, instead of weeping for their sons, and went their way sobbing and hiding their faces in their aprons."

[1] J. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 2nd edition, III., p. 333 (1869).

Michelet is not always trustworthy, but this scene certainly contains a grain of truth—*si non e vero e bene trovato.*

After a victory of Dumouriez (October 14th, 1792, the cannonade of Valmy), Danton was sent by the Convention as Commissioner to Belgium. He had to apply to that country the principles of the Revolution, abolishing the tithes of the clergy and the feudal privileges of the nobility; but Dumouriez checked his zeal. On his return to Paris in January 1793, he found that his wife had just died, but it was for him to devote himself to the country, and he returned to Belgium when Dumouriez was undertaking a venturesome raid into the United Dutch Provinces and attacking the Prince of Saxe-Coburg and the Austrians in the rear.

During the general panic—as we have stated—the Revolutionary Tribunal and the Committee of Public Safety were instituted on April 3rd, 1793, thanks to Danton's passionate impulsiveness. He himself was elected as member of the latter, but at once resigned, as he did not desire to take part in the Government, preferring to remain an active member of the Convention. He distinguished himself in the struggle of the Mountain against the Girondins, which was decided by a rebellion of the people (May 31st—June 1st).

At the revolt in the departments, which followed hereupon; at the invasion of the Prussians in Alsace; at the terrible rising in the Vendée;—Danton showed his former strength as president of the Convention. He supported the proposal of Chaumette to form

a flying army under Ronsin to protect the food supplies of Paris, and passed the law by which the poor citizens who attended the sectional assemblies were allowed two francs attendance fee.

But since the summer of 1793, his zeal had declined —Eros had been playing tricks on him.

He fell violently in love with a young citoyenne, catholic, royalist, and counter-Revolutionary, whom he asked in marriage; but the mother of Mademoiselle Louise Gély demanded that the marriage should be solemnized by a dismissed priest, and likewise, that her future son-in-law should attend confession;— the fierce lion, tamed by the gentle lamb, consented to everything. He went with his second wife to his country-seat at Arcis-sur-Aube, and remained there till November 1793. The execution of the Girondins aroused his compassion, but still he remained in the background, and only lived for his young wife. Then followed Hébert's attack on the tamed and sleeping lion, to which Camille Desmoulins replied in the *Vieux Cordelier*, winning thus the sympathy of the moderates.

All this was known to Robespierre, and, in spite of much that he considered censurable in Danton's conduct, he remained true to him till March 1794. When once he gave ear to the charges of Billaud-Varenne, he began to waver; and a secret motive decided his future attitude.

Robespierre had an unexpressed antipathy towards Danton; he was the calm, composed politician, who desired to regulate everything by reasonable conviction and strict principles; Danton, the giant, the

athlete, the worshipper of the pleasures of the table and female beauty, the sensual Danton, filled him with disgust; he considered himself greatly superior as a man, and in addition to this, there were constant political grievances and complaints.

XLII

THE DANTONISTS ARRESTED

DANTON and Camille Desmoulins had made themselves conspicuous by their exuberance at the execution of the Hébertists, when Camille had stoves carried round the tumbrils on pikes, to the excessive joy of the greater number amongst the *indulgents* and secret royalists.

The Muscadins danced with the *pierreuses* of the Palais Royal round the scaffold, and the confused sound of a thousand rejoicing voices was heard when Hébert's head was placed under the knife. But the more earnest patriots reflected, and lamented that an innocent fanatic like Cloots, and a brave general like Ronsin, should have been implicated in the political trial of the Hébertists. The Committee soon discovered in Danton the leader of the royalists. Saint-Just and Billaud-Varenne did not hesitate a moment, and were convinced that he and his friends were becoming dangerous to the future of the Revolution.

The charges against him rested merely upon suspicion.

Danton was suspected of being an accomplice in the treason of Dumouriez, and the latter has stated in his Memoirs that he had decided towards the end of 1792 to march on Paris, dissolve the Convention,

and suppress Jacobinism. He stated further that this plan had been known to four men only, of whom three were mentioned: Danton, Lacroix, and Westermann.[1]

There were no legal proofs: political animosity alone decided. According to Louis Blanc, the author of "*La Révolution française*," Vadier, a member of the Committee of General Safety, thus prophesied Danton's fate, at the end of March: "We will soon empty that stuffed turbot—*ce turbot farci*."[2]

Danton was repeatedly warned, but he did not believe that his opponents dared to lay hands on him; and of Robespierre he said: "If I dreamt that he had the thought only of arresting me, I would devour him."

Meanwhile his fate was decided upon, in the evening of March 31st, 1794, when the two Committees held a joint meeting, and arrived at the following important decision, which appears in the handwriting of Barère: "The Committees of Public Safety and General Safety decree that Danton, Lacroix (of the Department d'Eure-et-Loire), Camille Desmoulins, and Philippeaux, all members of the National Convention, be arrested, conducted to the Luxembourg prison and placed in solitary confinement, and instruct the Mayor of Paris to carry out this command immediately."[3]

This was signed by eighteen members in the following order: Billaud-Varenne, Vadier, Carnot, Le Bas, Louis (du Bas-Rhin), Collot d'Herbois, Barère, Saint-

[1] *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, IV., p. 14.
[2] Louis Blanc, *Révolution française*, X., p. 356.
[3] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 475.

Just, Jagot, C. A. Prieur, Couthon, Dubarran, Vouland, Moyse Bayle, Amar, Elie Lacoste, Robespierre, Lavicomterie. Only two of those present refused to sign: Robert Lindet and Philippe Rhul; the former, who was entrusted with the superintendence of the food supplies to Paris, and the army provisions, declared; "I am here to feed the citizens, not to kill patriots."[1]

It is possible that Robespierre found it difficult to sign this mandate, but submitted to the persuasions of Billaud-Varenne and Saint-Just, and this is probably the reason why his name appears almost at the bottom of the list of signatures.

Time was when he had been very intimate with Camille and Lucile Desmoulins and their little son, and he had frequently taken up the cudgels for the young editor in the Jacobin Club; but the tide had swept him on.

The authorities thought a military escort necessary for this arrest, as opposition was feared.

On the evening of March 31st, Danton was seated in his study, deep in thought at his fireplace, when his friend Panis arrived to inform him of the decisions of the Committees, and advised him to flee. But he muttered his former opinion: "They dare not."

A little later Robert Lindet came in, and advised the same course, to which Danton replied:

"Fly! Does one carry his country with him at the sole of his boot!"

Camille Desmoulins himself opened the door to the servants of the Committee; he took a painful

[1] Dr. Robinet, *Procès des Dantonistes*, p. 123.

farewell from wife and child, and like Danton, offered no resistance.

The next morning the Parisians were early astir. Danton arrested! The sitting of the Convention would be an interesting and important one.

Delmas, a friend of Danton, asked the chairman, Tallien, to request the absent members, who were at work in the special committees, to attend the meeting, as an important proposal would be made. This was done at once, and very soon all of them were in their seats. The butcher Légendre, a great friend of Danton, rose and said: "Citizens! four members of this Assembly have been arrested during the night. Danton is one of them. I do not know the names of the others, . . . but all I ask is, that they may be brought here and accused or absolved by you."

This was opposed by Fayau, a strictly Republican member from the Vendée, who declared that it would establish a precedent for all prisoners, who were arrested in accordance with the law; and he demanded that the report of the Committee should at once be heard.

The Convention was intensely agitated, when Robespierre, the best speaker of the Committees, addressed the members as follows:

"By the disquietude which prevails in this assembly, it is easy enough to perceive that we have before us a grave subject, and that we have to deal with the question whether a few men will be allowed now to get the better of the whole country."

He opposed the motion of Légendre; the same proposal was made at the arrest of Chabot, Bazire,

and Fabre 'd'Eglantine, and rejected. Légendre had praised the services rendered by Danton to the country, but it was not sufficient to mention a few meritorious actions. The whole political career of the accused was to be judged; and he added: "We do not want privileges, and neither do we want idols."

The majority in the Convention applauded these words, and Robespierre continued to explain that some had tried to persuade him he would be exposed to great risks if he allowed the severity of the law to be applied to Danton. "What do I care, indeed, for dangers? My life belongs to the country; my heart is free from fear because I am exempt from crimes, and if I die, it will be without reproach and without ignominy."

More applause; the impression made by this speech was so great that Légendre left his friend Danton in the lurch, and stammered all sorts of foolish excuses.

Saint-Just now followed with his severe indictment, drawn up from some notes by Robespierre. Danton was accused of having been a friend to tyranny, of having conspired with Mirabeau to save the dynasty, and thrown in his lot with Dumouriez; of a notorious friendship with the Duke of Orleans; and at last of having shown himself as a thoroughly unprincipled man, betraying his friends, and ignoring the noblest virtues. He ended: "If Fabre is innocent, if Dumouriez and d'Orléans were innocent, then Danton is so, without doubt. J'en ai trop dit: il répondra à la justice."

The whole Convention was carried away by this

speech; the decision of the two Committees was approved of unanimously, and the arrest and trial confirmed.

Still, not a single proof of Danton's treason had been brought forward during the sitting.

XLIII

GRIEVANCES AGAINST THE DANTONISTS

THE two Committees had many complaints against Danton and his friends. Billaud-Varenne and Barère were his bitterest enemies in the Committee of Public Safety, while Vadier, Amar, and Vouland, were his principal opponents in the Committee of General Safety. When Fabre d'Eglantine had been arrested a few days before, Danton had risen to defend him, upon which Billaud-Varenne exclaimed, in a threatening tone :

"Woe to him who is at one with Fabre, and who is still his dupe. He has deceived the best patriots."[1]

The friends of Danton had attempted to moderate the extreme severity of the Revolutionary-Republican Government, but they had chosen a very unfortunate moment. The Republic was at war with nearly all Europe, and fought on her own territory, in the Vendée, against Lyons and against Toulon.

The Government would at once be deprived of the firmness which she so greatly needed if an attack were permitted on the actions of the two Committees, as carrying out the orders of the National Convention.

Danton's desire and project to negotiate for peace

[1] *Moniteur*, No. 116, an II. (1794).

with England was, according to many, the work of a conspirator.

One of the Dantonists, Philippeaux, complained daily in the Convention of the misgovernment and violence in the Vendée by the Commissioners and Generals. Another member, Bourbon de l'Oise, who was not included in the trial of the Dantonists, had continually insisted that the Committees should openly account for their actions; and Danton had supported this. While the latter tried to forget, in his newly found domestic joys, the many anxieties of political life, Camille Desmoulins had more and more incensed the Committees by his language in *le Vieux Cordelier*, and it was stated that Danton revised and corrected the various numbers of this journal.

No doubt his attacks were extremely violent, and, amongst others, he compared the Government of the Committees and the Commissioners in the Departments to "the detestable and detested rule of Tiberius." Many moderates and royalists applauded Camille for this bold language, as it tended to destroy the unity of the Revolutionary movement, to the great delight of the enemies of the Republic at home and abroad.

Even the two friends of Camille-Fréron and Brune, —the future Marshall of the Emperor Napoleon—did their best to restrain him; and Robespierre said to his sister Charlotte: "Camille se perd." [1]

But he went on, in his careless way, relying on the exceptional support which his paper found everywhere. He was urged on in his work by his young

[1] Ernest Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 483.

wife, and would often say gaily, as he took his little Horace on his knee: "*Edamus et bibamus, cras enim moriemur.*"[1]

In the seventh number of the *Vieux Cordelier*, he attacked Collot d'Herbois and Barère more boldly than ever. He charged the two Committees with having been guilty of cruelties which would have startled even Commodus, Caligula, and Heliogabalus. These attacks were so imprudent and dangerous that many subscribers at once stopped their paper, when Camille's name was struck from the list of members of the Jacobin Club.

He abused Vadier, Amar, and Vouland, the most violent enemies of Danton, and said of Robespierre: "I refuse him the name of sage, *ineptus esse dicitur*," and of the upright and incorruptible Saint-Just: "One notices, from his bearing and conduct, that he regards his head as the corner-stone of the Republic, and that he carries it like a Saint-Sacrament."

"And I shall make him carry his like a Saint-Dennis," Saint-Just is supposed to have said.

When the publisher saw that the number of subscribers decreased, he himself struck out some of the most violent paragraphs; and shortly afterwards the publication ceased.

Camille Desmoulins had formerly been on very good terms with Robespierre; but the latter turned from him on account of his unpardonable frivolities. At a visit to the Duplays he asked the youngest daughter, Elisabeth, to take charge of a book for him; and when she and Robespierre opened it a

[1] Matton aîné, *Correspondance inédite de Camille Desmoulins*, pp. 16, 17.

little later, it was found to be a work of Aretino, illustrated with the vilest pictures.

Camille thought that the Republican policy should be based on "laxity of morals." Saint-Just maintained: "The Republic is not a Senate; she is Virtue itself." While Robespierre stated: "The essential province of the democratic Government is Virtue."

In this respect Danton made a still more unfavourable impression on Robespierre than Camille. He continually used the coarsest language, but made himself out much worse than he really was. Robespierre seemed to have been much annoyed with Danton on one occasion, when he accused his friend Camille of the worst immorality. He told Saint-Just of this in his well-known *Notes fournies à Saint-Just par Robespierre*—on which the accusation against Danton would shortly be based. Robespierre's words were:

"I remember that once, when Danton came to see me, he spoke with contempt of Camille Desmoulins, and attributed the writings of the editor of the *Vieux Cordelier* to a private and scandalous vice, which was quite foreign to the Revolution. This slander was to me the proof of a vicious and ungrateful character.[1]

The mutual friends of Danton and Robespierre attempted at the last moment to reconcile the two demagogues. In the middle of March 1794, they were both invited to a dinner-party by Humbert, at whose house Robespierre had lived in 1790 and 1791. The historical details of this dinner are somewhat

[1] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 416.

obscure. It is said by some that it took place in the rue Saintogne (au Marais), and others mention Charenton, while Billaud spoke of a dinner "à la campagne."

There were about twelve guests, amongst whom were Panis and Legendre, members of the Convention, Sellier, juryman at the Revolutionary Tribunal, Vilain d'Aubigny,—official at the War Office, and a mutual friend of Danton and Robespierre.

Vilain d'Aubigny wrote a letter to Billaud-Varenne about this gathering, in which he stated that he himself had spoken, pointing out to the two friends of the people that every one regretted their personal differences; to which Danton replied that he bore Robespierre no grudge, but that he had constantly been treated by him with great coolness, no doubt on account of the hatred with which he was regarded by Saint-Just and Billaud-Varenne. He complained of Robespierre's credulity in believing all the nonsense that fools and gossips told him about plots, poison, and daggers.

"I know the plans of the two quacks whom I mentioned." And added, "They want to have me arrested, but the cowards dare not. Believe me, shake off intrigues, and rejoin the patriots. Let us embrace!"

Upon this the two men are supposed to have embraced one another, and everybody was moved. Robespierre alone remained "cold as marble," concludes d'Aubigny. The tale is evidently not a true description of the incident, and it is unknown what really was done or said during the meal; but a

reconciliation did certainly not take place ; things had already gone too far.

The writer stated this after the proceedings of July 27th and 28th, when he tried to glorify Danton, as was the custom at that time. Danton seemed to return more and more to the *ancien-régime*, and to please a beloved wife he had sacrificed his past greatness.

XLIV

THE DANTONISTS IN THE LUXEMBOURG

DANTON, Camille Desmoulins, Philippeaux, and Lacroix, were confined in separate cells, but they met when they were conducted to the clerk of courts' room to hear the indictment. Camille flew into a rage when he read the document; Danton ridiculed it, and laughed at Camille; Lacroix remarked calmly: "I am going to cut my hair, to save Sanson the trouble."[1]

On returning to his cell, Camille wrote to his wife as follows:

"Darling Lucile! My goddess! My angel! Fate wills it that from the windows of my cell I look upon the gardens where I used to walk with you eight years ago, and on the very same corner, which brings before my mind many reminiscences in the history of our love. Nobody is allowed to see me; but in my thoughts I am nearer to you than ever—with you, with mother, and my little Horace. . . .

"During the time that I am confined here I shall write to you, for there is no need to take up my pen for my defence or anything else. The eight volumes of my Republican works will justify me. . . . They are a good pillow, on which my conscience slumbers

[1] *Mémoires sur les prisons*, II., p. 154.

CAMILLE DESMOULINS. (To face p. 204.

whilst waiting for the Tribunal and the judgment of history. . . . Do not think that I despair. I trust to the equity of men and my liberation. Yes, my beloved! we shall again meet in the Luxembourg Garden. . . . Adieu Lucile! Adieu Maronne! Adieu Horace! I cannot embrace you, but the tears that run down my cheeks seem to tell me that I am pressing you to my heart!"[1]

Poor Lucile sobbed: "I weep like a woman, because he suffers, because he does not see us. . . . But I will have the courage of a man. I will save him."

Remembering the former intimate friendship between Robespierre and her husband, she hurried to Danton's young wife to persuade her to come to Robespierre. But Madame Danton, who was on the point of becoming mother, refused, and maintained that she would not be under any obligation to the Jacobin.[2]

Hereupon the unfortunate Lucile decided to write to Robespierre; and this letter proves how terribly the poor woman was unnerved: "That hand which has so often pressed yours has dropped the pen too soon, when it could no longer hold it, to write your praises." She further reminded him of their former close friendship, of his love for Horace, who had so often sat and played on his knees.

All this was written, as it were, with blood and tears, and arouses the utmost pity for the hapless young

[1] Matton aîné, *Correspondance inédite de Camille Desmoulins*, p. 214 (1836).

[2] Villaumé, in his *Histoire de la Révolution*, IV., p. 55, maintains that he has received these words from Madame Danton herself.

whilst waiting for the Tribunal and the judgment of history. . . . Do not think that I despair. I trust to the equity of men and my liberation. Yes, my beloved! we shall again meet in the Luxembourg Garden. . . . Adieu Lucile! Adieu Maronne! Adieu Horace! I cannot embrace you, but the tears that run down my cheeks seem to tell me that I am pressing you to my heart!"[1]

Poor Lucile sobbed: "I weep like a woman, because he suffers, because he does not see us. . . . But I will have the courage of a man. I will save him."

Remembering the former intimate friendship between Robespierre and her husband, she hurried to Danton's young wife to persuade her to come to Robespierre. But Madame Danton, who was on the point of becoming mother, refused, and maintained that she would not be under any obligation to the Jacobin.[2]

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woman; but it is evident that extreme suffering had stupefied her, for Camille's pen had not always written in praise of Robespierre; in the last numbers of *le Vieux Cordelier* he had even called him "ineptus."[1]

Lucile was in error if she believed that it was in Robespierre's power to save her husband, as Billaud-Varenne, with Amar, Vadier, and Vouland, of the Committee of General Safety, who had been most severely attacked in the *Vieux Cordelier*, would not have allowed any interference.

Lucile did not finish her letter, and in bitter anguish laid aside her pen. Robespierre certainly never received it.[2]

But she resorted to another measure, and wrote to the captive General Arthur Dillon, an Irishman in French service, who was an intimate friend of Camille, and one of her admirers. Dillon thought that the public would disapprove of the execution of Danton and Desmoulins, and decided to distribute money amongst the people, and to move them to attack the Palace of Justice and liberate the prisoners. He was imprudent enough to communicate his plans to a fellow-prisoner, Laflotte, formerly Ambassador to Florence, who informed the Committee of Public Safety of the plot, in the expectation of receiving his freedom as a reward.

It is also stated that another prisoner, Captain Amans, wrote to Robespierre as follows: "Dillon works in his room every night until five or six o'clock in the morning; he has a faithful agent with him, who

[1] Matton aîné's publication of *le Vieux Cordelier*.
[2] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 483.

comes and goes with parcels. All sorts of mysterious individuals come to see him, and have secret interviews." [1]

It is a fact that the Mayor of Paris was commanded, on April 2nd, 1794, to conduct Laflotte from the Luxembourg, "*sous sure garde*," to the Tuileries; and he was then probably instructed to obtain more information. In this he succeeded, for the next day he was told by Dillon that two other prisoners, Thouret and Simond, were to take part in the conspiracy; and he likewise saw that Dillon handed a parcel containing three thousand livres to the gaoler, addressed to Lucile Desmoulins, "with which to send people round to the Revolutionary Tribunal."

When the Committees were informed of this, they ordered the two turnkeys of the Luxembourg to be brought before them; and after examining these men, the following mandate was signed by Dubarran, Couthon, C. A. Prieur, Carnot, Vouland, Barère, Billaud-Varenne, and Robespierre:

"The joint Committees of Public and General Safety order that the wife of Camille Desmoulins shall be immediately arrested, imprisoned in Sainte-Pélagie, and that all her papers be sealed."

It did not seem to weigh with these men that intense suffering had made the poor woman frantic and imprudent. The welfare of the country came first.

It is tolerably certain that Robespierre was not disposed to doom Lucile Desmoulins; but doubtless he was obliged to give in to the manifestations of

[1] Jules Claretie, *Camille Desmoulins, étude sur les Dantonistes*, p. 367.

his colleagues, and certainly did his best to avoid inhumanity.

On the third day of the Dantonists' trial, Billaud-Varenne reported on the "conspiration des prisons," and informed the Convention that Madame Philippeaux had asked for admittance to the Assembly to plead her husband's cause. He thought, therefore, that this request should be granted, in order to acquaint her with the documents which would prove her husband's guilt.

But Robespierre opposed this, on the ground that the wives of other prisoners had been refused a similar request. "There is no need to confound Philippeaux' wife with himself. His trial is now taking place; let us wait for the verdict."[1]

Meanwhile Danton, Lacroix, Camille Desmoulins, and Fabre d'Eglantine, had been conducted, on the night of the first of April, to the Conciergerie of the Palais de Justice.

A very pretentious book exists, by a certain advocate Riouffe, who had been confined at the Conciergerie for a long time, but was liberated, and died at an advanced age. Riouffe published his Memoirs, in which he related something about the arrival of the Dantonists. According to him, Danton made use of some very forcible expressions, as was his custom, and possibly the following remark, of which the coarsest words have been omitted, is authentic:

"I leave everything in a frightful welter; not one of them understands anything of government. If I left my legs to Couthon . . . the Committee of

[1] *Moniteur*, April 5th, 1794.

Public Safety might still be able to go on a little longer."

The examination of the Dantonists was set down for April 2nd, and with them were tried Fabre d'Eglantine, Chabôt, Bazire, Delaunay, and Julien de Toulouse, besides some other obscure individuals; all of them accused of financial corruption, forgery, and similar frauds.

To mass these swindlers with men like Danton, Camille, and their friends, who were only charged with purely political offences, was tyrannical injustice—and therefore Nemesis was not to tarry long.

XLV

THE TRIAL OF THE DANTONISTS

THE trial of the Dantonists began on April 2nd, 1794, at ten o'clock in the morning.

The Revolutionary Tribunal sat in the Salle de la Liberté of the Palais de Justice under the presidency of Herman, who was assisted by four judges and the public prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville. Amongst the jury were Renaudin le luthier, and Dr. Souberbielle, both friends of Robespierre; a few lawyers appeared on behalf of some of the prisoners, who, however, had had little to say.

At the appointed hour fourteen accused persons were conducted inside the hall: Fabre d'Eglantine, Bazire, Chabôt, Delaunay (d'Angers), Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Philippeaux, Lacroix, Hérault de Séchelles, l'ex-abbé d'Espagnac, the Spaniard Gusman, the Austrians Frey, and the Dane Diederichs.

Three accomplices had been able to make good their escape: Julien de Toulouse, Benoit (d'Angers), and the baron de Batz.

It was, indeed, a singular combination. The real delinquents were Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Philippeaux, and Lacroix, who had to be tried for purely political offences, which have already been enumerated.

It was, no doubt, a skilful trick on the part of their prosecutors to include in this trial the mysterious and undiscoverable Baron de Batz, well known as a royalist, and who had done his utmost to discredit and undermine the Republican Government by artful intrigues; or the two Austrian bankers Frey, who were accused of all kinds of suspicious and dark speculations, and of having bribed, or attempted to bribe, some members of the Convention, particularly Chabôt, Bazire, Fabre d'Eglantine, and Delaunay.

Danton was more than justified in declaring his extreme indignation when he discovered that he would be tried with these adventurers and reprobates.

This very censurable manner of massing the prisoners was the work of the Committee of General Safety, which had in its midst the bitterest enemies of Danton and Desmoulins; it was they who had instructed Fouquier-Tinville, and therefore now, as with the Hébertists, the most motley combination had been thrown together.

Some witnesses were present, who had been summoned by the public prosecutor.

It is an acknowledged fact that the official reports (*le procès-verbal d'audience dans le Bulletin du Tribunal révolutionnaire*) referring to this trial were compiled in a prejudiced and unsatisfactory manner.

But fortunately an impartial account of this renowned case has been preserved.

The painter Topino-Lebrun was nominated as juror at the Tribunal, but was not called upon to take his seat; he remained in the Court-room during the whole trial and made notes which have been saved

and published.[1] Assisted by these notes, the well-known biographer of the Dantonists, le Docteur Robinet, has been able to bring this trial back to us, as it originally took place.

Nothing of importance occurred on the first day of the hearing.

The clerk of the court read over the various indictments—firstly, the report of Amar, member of the Committee of General Safety, about the misdeeds of Delaunay, Julien, Bazire, Chabôt, and Fabre d'Eglantine, indicated as unwarrantable interference in the criminal manœuvres, and forgery of public documents committed on the occasion of the suppression of the India Company; secondly, the indictment of the public prosecutor against Benoit, de Batz, d'Espagnac, Gusman, and Diederichs; thirdly, Saint-Just's report to the Convention against Danton, Desmoulins, Fabre, Hérault, Lacroix, and Philippeaux.

The reading of these documents took such a long while that there was no time left on that day to proceed with the real trial. The court rose, therefore, and adjourned till the next morning (April 3rd) at nine o'clock, when General Westermann was added to the group, who, like Danton, was accused of having conspired with Dumouriez. Fabre d'Eglantine was very unwell, and had been allowed a chair in the dock.

To the formal questions of the president about name and residence of the prisoners, Danton replied: "My

[1] *Notes de Topino-Lebrun sur le procès des Dantonistes, d'après une copie collationnée, sur le manuscrit original, par M. Chardaillet.* Paris, 1875.

abode will soon be annihilation (*dans le Néant*); as to my name, you will find it in the pantheon of history."

Hérault-Séchelles answered the same questions with: "I am called Marie-Jean—hardly a striking name, even among the Saints. I sat in this hall, and was detested by parliamenteers," hinting at his former position as attorney-general to the Parlément de Paris.

Camille replied: "My age is that of the Sansculotte Jesus, when he died—thirty-three years."

Westermann, who had fought in the Vendée with the greatest bravery against the Royalists, had been arrested by a decree of the Convention of the day before. He was ranked at the bar of the Tribunal, without having been acquainted with the indictment, and when he was asked for his name and residence he complained of this irregularity. The president stated that it was "une forme inutile," at which Danton instantly exclaimed, "But are we not here for form's sake?"

Still, Westermann's request was granted, and he was taken by one of the judges to an adjoining hall, where the indictment of Fouquier-Tinville was read to him. Whilst this was done Danton cried out:

"If they will only let us speak without interruption, I am certain to silence my accusers, and if the French people are what they ought to be, I shall even have to ask mercy for those fellows;" and to the jury: "I have assisted in the institution of the Tribunal—I know its powers;" and to Cambon, who sat among the witnesses, he said: "Do you think that we are

conspirators? He does not believe it; he laughs—make a note that he has laughed."

Westermann, on re-entering, exclaimed: "I demand to be allowed to expose and show myself naked to the people. I have received seven wounds, all of them in front, only one in the back—my act of accusation."

At first the president, Herman, examined the groups of financial reprobates: Chabôt, Bazire, Julien, and Delaunay. It appeared that the first-mentioned had treated with the Austrian bankers Emmanuel and Junius Frey, to obtain the passing of such decrees in the Convention as would enable them to speculate advantageously in the shares of the India Company. Furthermore, these bankers had had suspicious conferences with the Baron de Batz, who was constantly eluding pursuit. Julien de Toulouse, and Delaunay, were likewise implicated in these notorious transactions.[1] Chabôt had taken poison in his cell, but, by speedy assistance, had been saved for this trial, and consequently for the guillotine. He was married to a sister of the banker Junius Frey, and had received two hundred thousand francs as a marriage gift, on the understanding that he would do his best for them and their speculations in the Convention. Besides this amount, he received a sum of a hundred thousand francs to bribe Fabre d'Eglantine, who was to do his best to remove Cambon from the Department of Finance, and to supplant him. Fabre was also against the retention of the India Company, and had therefore to be converted; but he refused the bribe.

[1] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 304.

Chabôt kept it, and succeeded in securing the assistance of Bazire; and they frequently had conferences with de Batz at the country house of Julien de Toulouse, where they indulged in various debaucheries. A little later, however, Chabôt began to scent danger, and informed Robespierre of all that had taken place; maintaining that he had only associated himself with these men so as to obtain full knowledge of their plans. He showed him the hundred thousand francs destined for Fabre, and proposed to hand them over to the safe keeping of the Committee of General Safety.

The two Committees prudently arrested the whole batch, and thus disappointed the traitor. There was no doubt of their guilt; but it was justly asked what connection there could be between these swindlers and the Dantonists.

XLVI

THE TRIAL OF THE DANTONISTS (II.)

ON the second day of the trial a large, restless, and excited crowd surged round the Palace of Justice; from all corners of Paris they had come, the inquisitive, the despairing, and the contented, to catch a glimpse of the great, admired, and hated leader; they thronged the Pont au Change, the Pont Saint-Michel, and stood on the Quai de la Ferraille, listening to the stentorian voice of Danton, which was wafted now and then through the open windows of the court-room. After the examination of Chabôt's accomplices, Herman addressed Danton with the words:

"Danton! The Convention accuses you of having known and favoured Dumouriez' plans for sending an army to Paris, and restoring the king on his throne."[1]

Foaming with rage, Danton roared: "Let them come here, the cowards who slander me; let them show themselves to my face; let them come here, and I will crush them with their own villainy and ignominy. I have said it, I repeat it—it will soon be over with me.—My name remains in the Pantheon. They can have my head. I am tired of life. . . . I want to have done with it."

[1] Le Docteur Robinet, *Le Procès des Dantonistes*, p. 142.

Herman here interrupted him, saying that audacity was no proof of innocence; defence was allowed, but it must be made in an orderly manner, as he was tried by command of the highest authority—the Convention. "I am bold, but only for the good of my country, as I have often proved. Then boldness is permitted, and, during a period of Revolution, even necessary. Would you have me conceal my indignation, my disgust, at so unjust and monstrous a charge? Do you expect from a Revolutionist such as I, a calm and collected defence? I am accused of having been bribed.—How impossible! Men like me are priceless. I ask a proof from those who accused me in the Convention; half a proof, a hint even. Men of my force bear on their forehead, in ineffaceable characters, the seal of their Republican Genius, and I am charged?—I?—with having grovelled before common despots!—with having conspired with Mirabeau and Dumouriez? And to such charges I must reply now, and here"—pointing to the indictment of Saint-Just; "but Saint-Just will have to account to posterity for having thrown dirt at the best friend of the people, the most staunch defender of their rights! When I glance at this indictment a feeling of unutterable loathing seizes me . . .!"

Herman once more urged him to control himself, maintaining that it was not permissible to use such a tone to the Convention, to the Tribunal, or to the Sovereign people, who had the right to call him to account for his actions. He reminded him that Marat had defended himself in a proper way, and did not bring forward all kinds of possibilities and probabilities, but facts.

"Well, then, I will humiliate and defend myself point by point. I am supposed to have been bribed by Mirabeau, by the Duke of Orléans, by Dumouriez. I a partisan of the royalist and of the king?

"Every one knows that I have attacked Mirabeau among the Jacobins, and forced him to remain at his post.

"Did I remain silent about Mirabeau, when I defended Marat against him?—when I fought against Lafayette? Have I not done more than what is . . . to be expected of an ordinary citizen? Have I not prevented the tyrant from escaping to Saint-Cloud? "Have I not shown and advocated the necessity of the Revolution by the placards in my district?

"Let them show themselves, these accusers of mine! Let them come here, the foul slanderers, and I will tear off the masks which protect them against universal contempt!"

Once more the president reminded him that this was not the way to convince the jury of his innocence.

"I defend myself. I am not speaking to the jury. Selfishness or low motives have never had any influence on my actions! I have devoted myself wholly to France. I have generously sacrificed to my country, my whole existence! That is why I fought against Lafayette and Bailly, and all the conspirators who wished to seize the highest posts and to murder liberty!

"I will now refer to the villainous scoundrels who deceived Robespierre. I have important revelations to make, and I demand an attentive hearing in the name of the country."

Herman reminded him once more that the whole Convention accused him, and that he therefore did not possess the right to single out one or more members.

Danton continued, smiling bitterly: "I am told that I have assisted in restoring the king to his throne, and favoured the flight of the tyrant, when I opposed his journey to Saint-Cloud with all my force, obstructing his passage with spears and bayonets, and seizing the reins of his horses. If this is taking the king's part, then I plead guilty to that charge."

Danton referred here to the incident of April 18th, 1791, when the king and his family wished to drive from the Tuileries to Saint-Cloud, and when he had headed the people in obstructing their passage at the large gates of the palace, as it was feared that they intended to escape from France.

The unfortunate king calmly wrote in his diary:

"*Monday*, *April* 18*th*.—When departing for Saint-Cloud at half-past eleven to-day, we were prevented *on nous a empêché*." [1]

Continuing, Danton defended his attitude during July 1791, after the disturbances in the Champs de Mars, and maintained that murderers had been sent after him when he was in hiding at Arcis-sur-Aube, at his father-in-law's, and that an order for his arrest had been issued, when he had fled to London for a short time.

Herman asked him if he had not been to England on more than one occasion, to which he replied that he had only been there once, in 1791.

Since 1789 he had participated in all the important

[1] *Journal de Louis XVI., publié par* Louis Nicolardot (1873), p. 142.

events of the Revolution, such as the taking of the Bastille, the removal of the king from Versailles to Paris on October 5th and 6th. He further defended himself against the charge of having been in hiding in August 1792 at Arcis-sur-Aube, and declared that he was in Paris on August 9th and 10th, when he was present in the meeting of his section at nine o'clock in the morning of the latter day, and further maintained that, in his district—Section de Marat, on the left bank of the Seine, opposite l'Ile de la Cité—he had prepared the inhabitants for the revolt, and that he had proceeded, at one o'clock on August 10th, to the Revolutionary municipality, in his quality as *substitut de la Commune*, to demand the death-sentence for General Mandat, who had given orders to shoot at the people.

Danton went over the whole list of Saint-Just's charges. He gave in particular very satisfactory explanations with regard to his administration as Minister of Justice, while Cambon witnessed that, of the 400,000 livres of which he had charge, the sum of 130,000 livres had been returned to the treasury, while the balance had been used to make propaganda in the Departments; and Billaud-Varenne had received 6000 livres to proceed to the northern army.

To the charge that he had shown himself a friend of the Girondins, he replied that, on the contrary, they detested him heartily, and that Barbaroux—the Saint-Just of that faction—had demanded the heads of Robespierre, Marat, and himself.

The most serious accusation referred to his relations with Dumouriez.

He declared that he had met Dumouriez only once, but had had some correspondence with him. He called attention to the fact that he had sent Billaud-Varenne to Belgium to watch Dumouriez, and that the former had given an account of his mission in the Convention and in the Jacobin Club.

Billaud himself had told him that he was not certain whether or no Dumouriez was a traitor.

At this moment one of the jurors interrupted him with the question: "Can you tell us the reason why Dumouriez did not follow the retreating Prussians?"

Every one thought that Danton had had a hand in this.

XLVII

THE TRIAL OF THE DANTONISTS (III.)

TO the juror's question Danton replied: "When I was minister, I never occupied myself with military affairs, except in a public capacity. I was quite ignorant of all war operations; besides, I had sent Billaud-Varenne to watch Dumouriez. He alone can reply to that question. It is his duty to account for the execution of his mission."

The same juror asked why Billaud-Varenne had not been able to conceive anything of Dumouriez' plans. Danton answered that it was always difficult to see through the veil of the future; also that after the event it was easy to be wise. Besides, Billaud-Varenne, who himself was in doubt about Dumouriez' guilt, had brought his report before the Convention. The galleries repeatedly applauded him, to the great indignation of Herman. Louder and louder thundered Danton's voice, demanding that Billaud-Varenne and other members of the Convention should be called as witnesses at this trial; but the president replied evasively.

"I am refused witnesses! Very well then, I am not going to defend myself any more!" shouted Danton. Rage choked him, and prevented his uttering another sound; hereupon the president proposed that his defence should be postponed till the next day,

professing that he seemed tired. Danton was prepared to fall in with this, if they would indeed let him have his say in the morning.

The next day, April 4th, 1794, Louis Marie Lhuillier, an accomplice of the Baron de Batz, was added to the group of prisoners.

Herman began the sitting with the examination of Hérault-Séchelles, the Antinoüs of the Convention, who had been its president, when the Constitution of 1793 was accepted.

He was accused of having betrayed the plans of the Government to the enemies of France, after he had been elected with Barère to the Department of Foreign Affairs. Some letters from the Spanish ambassadors were read to substantiate this charge; but later it appeared that these had been purposely forged. Hérault replied that he declined to take notice of the unscrupulous accusations of his enemies, and pointed out that the neutrality of Switzerland had been obtained through his exertions. It is remarkable that no reference whatever was made to the fact that he had given shelter to an *émigré*, for it was this very circumstance which had led to his arrest.

Camille Desmoulins was accused of having scoffed at the Convention in his *Vieux Cordelier*, and also of having defended General Dillon, to which he retorted:

"It was I who began the Revolution, and my death will end it."

His journal had mainly attacked the Hébertists, and for this reason he had received encouragement from all sides.

Presently Herman addressed the Spaniard, Gusman, and after a few questions turned to Lacroix, who was accused of conspiracy with Dumouriez, and of blind obedience to him. Lacroix demanded that the witnesses whom he had named, and for whom he had asked during the last three days, should be heard immediately, to which Fouquier-Tinville replied that he could not summon them, as they were members of the Convention; the whole Assembly had accused him, and it was impossible to take a plaintiff as witness; but this unsatisfactory decision was sharply disputed by Lacroix, who persevered in his demand that his witnesses should be heard.

The public prosecutor exclaimed: "It is time to put an end to this struggle (*de faire cesser cette lutte*), a perfectly scandalous one, both for the Tribunal and for those who hear you. I will write to the Convention to ask its wishes; they will be exactly carried out."

But he did not keep his word. At the end of the sitting he went out to consult the members of the Committee of Public Safety, and met Billaud-Varenne and Saint-Just, who forbade him to ask for instructions from the Convention.

On April 4th, Danton had been allowed to resume his defence. Herman informed him that he was accused of having found fault with General Hanriot, and even of having proposed his arrest on May 31st, 1793, at the struggle between the Girondins and the National Guards under his command.

Louder than ever the lion's voice roared:

"All this is a monstrous libel. I have never opposed the Revolution of May 31st; on the contrary, three

months before, I had already maintained that it would be impossible to live in peace with the Girondins. I have always violently attacked Isnard's ideas. Does any one think me a hypocrite? Do I look like a hypocrite? Hanriot thought that I should declare against the revolt, and for that reason I said: 'Go on, do not be afraid; we only want to make it clear that the Assembly is free to act as it pleases!' I demand that the witnesses, who stood next to me on that day, shall be heard."

But Fouquier-Tinville did not reply, and Herman turned hereupon to Philippeaux and Westermann. Both were accused of being implicated with Dumouriez, and both declared that they were innocent. Westermann had also to defend himself against the charge of having ill-treated his soldiers in the Vendée, but he replied calmly:

"The good soldiers praise me, and do me justice; the censure of the cowards, who complain of me, and accuse me, can only contribute to my justification."

Thus ended the third day of the trial.

As previously stated, Fouquier promised to write to the Convention, but he wrote to the Committee instead. This letter, which has been preserved in the State archives,[1] is signed by Herman and Fouquier, and its contents were certainly not favourable to the issue of the trial. It begins with the words:

"A terrible storm has been raging ever since the sitting began. The maddened prisoners claim the hearing of their witnesses."

The names of sixteen members of the Convention

[1] Published by Dr. Robinet, *Le Procès des Dantonistes*, p. 177.

were mentioned, who had been asked to appear as witnesses—among them Fréron, Merlin de Douai, Legendre, Robert Lindet, Lecointre, and Merlin de Thionville.

The president and public prosecutor continued:

"They appeal to the public from the refusal which they pretend to have met with, in spite of the firmness of the president and the entire Tribunal; their protestations disturb the sitting, and they declare loudly that they will not be silent until their witnesses are heard."

The claim of the prisoners was perfectly legal; the conclusion of Fouquier's letter proves it fully:

"We request you to trace our line of conduct for us definitely, as the judiciary order furnishes us with no means whatever for justifying this refusal."

On receipt of this letter, on the afternoon of April 4th, Saint-Just and Billaud-Varenne immediately hurried to the Convention.

Saint-Just, in the name of the two committees, declared that the rebellious attitude of the prisoners had stopped the hearing of the trial until the Convention had come to a decision, according to information received from the public prosecutor.

It is greatly to the discredit of Saint-Just to have thus exaggerated from party feeling, and to have called it "the height of infamy" that the prisoners, the accomplices of Dumouriez and d'Orléans, were creating a revolt in the court-room, and betraying the secrets of their conscience in their rage and despair.

The letter of Fouquier-Tinville would have thrown quite a different light on the matter. At the same

time he mentioned the movement in the Luxembourg prison, and represented this also in the most partial light by saying "that the wife of Desmoulins had received money to agitate for a rebellion, with the object of assassinating patriots and the Revolutionary Tribunal."

And all these misrepresentations simply because the accused Dantonists insisted on the hearing of their witnesses, and on account of Lucile's letter to General Dillon.

After Billaud-Varenne had read his report with reference to the so-called "*conspiration des prisons*," based on the evidence of Laflötte, Saint-Just proposed that the Convention should order the president of the Tribunal to continue the trial, and to use all his authority to prevent disturbances of the peace on the part of the prisoners; and on his proposal the following motion was passed :

"The Convention decrees that any prisoner who resists or insults the national justice shall be at once excluded from the debates—*mis hors des débats*." And thus the death-sentence of the Dantonists was pronounced.

XLVIII

DANTON'S LAST DAY

THE 5th of April, 1794, was the last day of the Dantonists' trial. The crowds in the vicinity of the Palais de Justice surged and swayed more restlessly than ever, and the utmost excitement prevailed.

At the opening of the sitting, Fouquier-Tinville requested the clerk of court to read the decree, passed unanimously by the Convention on the previous day, which ordained that prisoners who insulted the judicial authorities would be deprived of the right of defence; at the same time, the report about the conspiracy in the Luxembourg was read. Camille Desmoulins, on hearing the name of his wife, exclaimed bitterly: "The brutes are not satisfied with killing me, they must also assassinate my wife."

Hereupon the public prosecutor informed the prisoners Lacroix and Danton that, in accordance with the decision of the Convention, neither their witnesses nor a large number for the prosecution would be called by the court. The verdict would be given according to documentary statements, against which they would be allowed to defend themselves.

Danton's huge frame shook; his eyes flashed

ominously; his voice thundered, asking whether it was true that he had insulted the legal authorities on the previous day?—he demanded that the judges, the jury, and the people, should witness to the facts. The president called for silence, and loudly rang his bell. Herman asked him vehemently whether he did not hear it, to which Danton cried:

"The voice of a man who defends his life and honour may well drown the jingling of your bell."

The galleries, the public outside, murmured ominously at the conduct of the president, and Danton, noticing this, exclaimed:

"Countrymen, you will judge me when I have said all; my voice must not be heard by you alone, but by the whole of France."

At the same moment he remarked Thuriot, a member of the Convention, who was standing on a chair to watch the proceedings, and at once addressed him:

"Go to the Assembly; go and ask that our witnesses may he heard."

At last the president succeeded in silencing him with his bell, and Danton sat down:

"President," he said, "I respect you; you have an honest soul."

When some of the members of the Committee of General Safety appeared in the court-room, with Amar and Vouland, his bitterest enemies, amongst them, he exclaimed contemptuously:

"Look at the cowardly assassins; they even follow us to death."

The trial proceeded with an unimportant examina-

tion of the Austrian bankers, Emmanuel and Junius Frey; but Danton and Lacroix at once insisted on continuing their defence. To this Herman replied by reading a decree of October 28th, which gave the Tribunal the right of asking the jury whether they had been sufficiently informed in case a trial lasted for more than three days; and he thereupon invited them to deliberate on that point. They left the room, were absent some considerable time, and on their return declared that they had been sufficiently instructed; and Herman hereupon judged:

"The jury being satisfied, the debates are closed."

The prisoners, naturally indignant, protested angrily.

"Closed!" shouted Danton. "What! How is that? They have not even begun. You have read no documents, heard no witnesses."

He had repeatedly spoken, but Camille Desmoulins, who had written a full and extensive defence during the night, had hardly been heard. Hérault-Séchelles, Philippeaux, and Westermann, had fared no better. There had been no documents, no witnesses, no pleas. The Tribunal had performed a legal drama in four acts; the fifth act—the death-sentence—had been fixed beforehand. Danton and Lacroix did not cease to protest, and the former exclaimed: "We are to be judged without having been heard. There have been no deliberations. We have lived long enough to slumber on the bosom of glory. Let them lead us to the scaffold."

The furious Camille, in a moment of frenzy, tore his written defence in pieces, and threw the fragments in Fouquier's face; they were afterwards collected and

handed to Lucile's parents.[1] And to this is due the absurd story that the Dantonists had thrown bread-crumbs at the heads of their judges.

Fouquier-Tinville hereupon declared that he would be obliged to take extraordinary measures, in consequence of the bold attitude of the prisoners; and he desired that the Tribunal should submit the questions to the jury, and that the verdict should be given in the absence of the prisoners. Consequently the jurymen left the court-room, and the prisoners were conducted to their cells. The task of the jury was not an enviable one, and Souberbielle stated later: "Cette affaire était un procès extraordinaire et politique."

It was the great struggle between the two Committees and the Dantonists, who had attacked the heads of the government, and held them responsible for all social and material misery. In the Committee of Public Safety, Billaud-Varenne and Saint-Just were the men who had opened the contest; and the latter carried with him Robespierre, the most influential member of the Committee. Twice the Convention had unanimously decided to leave the Dantonists to the Tribunal. What could the jury do? To take the part of the prisoners seemed impossible.

They had to reply to two questions, formulated by Herman, as follows:

"A conspiracy has existed, tending to restore royalty, and to destroy the National Convention and the Republican Government. Are Lacroix, Danton,

[1] This document was published by a relative of Camille Desmoulins, Matton aîné, in the *Œuvres de Camille Desmoulins* (1838).

Desmoulins, Philippeaux, Hérault de Séchelles, and Westermann, implicated in this plot?"

"A conspiracy has existed tending to dishonour the National Assembly, and to expose it to public scorn. Are Fabre d'Eglantine, Delaunay, Chabôt, Bazire, d'Espagnac, Gusman, Lhuillier, Junius Frey, Emmanuel Frey, and Diederichs, implicated in this plot?"

When the jury entered the court-room, the doom of the Dantonists could be read on their faces. All of them were found guilty with the exception of Lhuillier. The Tribunal hereupon pronounced the death-sentence, ordering that it should be read to the victims in their prison. When the official executed this command, mentioning the articles of the law which sent them to the scaffold, they silenced him by their expostulations; they wished to hear nothing more of it; they were indifferent about the weapon with which they were to be despatched.

La raison d'Etat had decided here. The violent denunciations of Camille Desmoulins in his journal had done most of the harm. To compare the rule of the two Committees with the tyranny of Nero and Tiberius was no trifling matter. But was it therefore just to send all the Dantonists to the guillotine?

After the third number of *le Vieux Cordelier*, Robespierre could no more take the part of his old friend Camille, as he had previously done among the Jacobins. He could not assist Danton, as the latter had drawn suspicion on himself in many ways; he had withdrawn from the struggle, to live in idleness

at Arcis-sur-Aube with his young wife ; he was always surrounded by doubtful characters, always flattered by the opponents of the two Committees. Through this Danton had become the head of a mysterious opposition, which aimed at obstructing the progressive Revolutionary movement at a time when the co-operation of all citizens was indispensable.

Although Robespierre had at first defended him, he was obliged to abandon Danton on the exhortations of Saint-Just, in spite of the dangers which this course would bring with it. If he were found innocent, both Committees would inevitably fall.

Afterwards Robespierre was unjustly represented as the author of the death-sentence of the Dantonists ; but we have seen already that Billaud-Varenne and Saint-Just took a much more active part in it. After his death, all responsibility was thrown on Robespierre ; it suited the Reaction to blacken the Revolution, and therefore every act of violence and injustice which had been committed was laid to his charge : for he was the most talented, the most honourable, of the Revolutionists.

XLIX

THE WIVES OF THE DANTONISTS

LUCILE DESMOULINS had been arrested and accused of having taken part in what was called "*la conspiration des prisons.*"

On the day of the execution of the Dantonists, April 5th, Vadier, of the Committee of General Safety, ascended the Tribune in the Convention to communicate to the Assembly that Dillon and Simond were plotting in the Luxembourg prison: "They have organized a band of cut-throats who, on the word of command, will leave the Luxembourg, seize the passages which lead to the Committees of Public and General Safety, fall on the members, and murder them."

Such accusations were at once believed. It is true that Dillon had written to Lucile Desmoulins, and had made some arrangements with a member of the Convention, Simond; but there need not have been any fear of danger. Still, even a moderate man like Couthon demanded that Dillon should be brought before the Tribunal as soon as possible.

Again a new set was massed together, who were all accused of having plotted in the prisons: Arthur Dillon; Simond, deputy; Gobel, the late bishop and the victim of Anacharsis Cloots; Chaumette, the

former attorney-general of the Commune; the actor Grammont-Roselly, the chief apostle of the cult of Reason, officer in Chaumette's Revolutionary army; Lambert, the gaoler of the Luxembourg; Jacqueline, Hébert's widow; Lucile Desmoulins, and some military prisoners.

Poor Lucile had done no wrong. Love and despair made her hover round the Luxembourg to catch a glimpse of Camille or send him a last greeting. She had not even received his last letter, and when he was conducted from his prison to the Conciergerie, he handed his letters to a fellow-prisoner, Grossé-Beaurepaire, who had no opportunity, however, of delivering these to Lucile, but gave them afterwards to a friend of Camille, Jules Paré, a former home-minister, who carefully preserved them.[1]

Lucile was tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal on April 11th, 12th, and 13th. The public prosecutor charged the strange group, who accompanied her before the judges, with the intention of restoring the monarchy and murdering the Convention.

It seems incredible that not one of the judges, not one of the jurors, understood how ridiculous it was to accuse Lucile of anything so designing. All that she had attempted was to save her husband—that was her only offence. At her examination she denied having received a letter with three thousand livres from General Dillon to agitate a revolt against the Convention.[2]

[1] Emile Campardon, *Le Tribunal révolutionnaire*, II., p. 254.

[2] Jules Claretie, *Camille Desmoulins, étude sur les Dantonistes* (1875), p. 370.

Laflötte, the informer, had declared this, with the difference, however, that the money was to be spent in causing a crowd in front of the Palace of Justice.

On April 13th, eighteen of the twenty-six prisoners were condemned to death ; and Lucile was one of the unfortunate victims. Very calm, and perfectly contented with the verdict, she exclaimed : "Oh, joy ! In a few hours I shall see my Camille again ! " And to her judges : "In quitting this earth, where all I once loved no longer binds me, I am less to be pitied than you, for until your death, which will be infamous, you will be haunted with remorse for what you have done." [1]

It is somewhat remarkable that Lucile only thought of her husband, and not of her little son ; but she knew that her mother would take care of him—her grief at the death of Camille was greater than her anxiety for her orphan child. When taken to the scaffold, she appeared in festive dress ; she had cut her hair, and sent the fair locks to her mother. When she remarked General Dillon,' she greeted him with a movement of her head, as her hands were tied, and said :

"I am sorry to be the cause of your death."

Dillon replied that she had only been used as a pretext for his execution, and lamented her untimely end, to which she answered : "Does my face look like that of a woman who needs consolation ? " [2]

[1] Jules Claretie, *Camille Desmoulins, étude sur les Dantonistes* (1875) p 371.

[2] Jules Claretie, *Ibid.*, p. 374.

LUCILE DESMOULINS. (To face p. 84.

Those who saw her seated in the tumbril, her head covered with a white shawl, were struck by her calm and gentle bearing. Arrived at the scaffold, General Dillon exclaimed: "Vive le Roi!" But Lucile was silent; brave and tranquil until the last, she remained quite contented; she died for her murdered husband—a victim to the purest and noblest love.

Her mother, Madame Duplessis, devoted herself wholly to her grandson Horace, and attached herself closely to Madame Philippeaux, who had likewise the charge of a fatherless child.

A year after Robespierre's death (July 28th, 1795), Merlin de Thionville stated in the Convention; "Flowers should be thrown on the tombs of the unfortunate Philippeaux and of Camille Desmoulins, who was the first to raise the tricoloured cockade at the Palace Egalité."[1]

On April 28th, 1796, the Council of Five Hundred decided to allow the son of Camille Desmoulins a yearly grant of two thousand francs until his eighteenth year, "considering that his father was taken to death for protesting against the proscriptions, and for recalling humane principles which had been long since forgotten." Horace Desmoulins became a lawyer in Paris, and emigrated to Haiti in 1817, where he died on June 29th, 1825, at the age of 33.

The fate of the widow and children of Danton was quite different. Madame Danton—Louise Gély—was seventeen years old when her husband's head fell on the guillotine; she fled at once with the children of his

[1] Jules Claretie, *Camille Desmoulins, étude sur les Dantonistes*, p. 377.

first marriage to her parents,[1] and married again about 1798. She died at a mature age in 1865, but never mentioned that she was the widow of the great Revolutionary leader. Danton's two sons, by his first marriage with Gabrielle Charpentier, were sent to Arcis-sur-Aube, where they were brought up by relatives. They inherited the large house and extensive gardens where their father had wished to die, and lived there quietly and in seclusion on account of their notorious name. The elder of the two sons, Antoine, had artistic talent, and made some excellent drawings. He executed the rough draft of a lithograph, representing the bridge of Arcis-sur-Aube, the large square, and Danton's house; but he declined to let his name appear on the print. The second son, Georges, bore a striking likeness to his father, but was retiring, and shrank from publicity. In 1848 the population of Arcis-sur-Aube wished to follow the example of the rest of France and plant a tree of liberty as a souvenir of the first Republic. They asked the sons of Danton for a poplar from their garden, as their father had given them one in December 1793.

The members of the municipal council, attended by a band and a large number of the inhabitants, went in procession to their house, and on the appearance of the two brothers, the crowd applauded loudly; the band struck up, and the Marseillaise was sung with enthusiasm. Such was the effect of these proceedings on Georges Danton that he fainted away, and died two months afterwards;[2] his brother survived him ten

[1] G. Lenotre, *Paris Révolutionnaire* (1895), p. 310.
[2] G. Lenotre, *Ibid.*, p. 311.

years, dying in 1858. He continued to live with his housekeeper, and the child which was born of this liaison was acknowledged by him as his daughter. She married a certain notary Menuel, who failed in business. Danton's house and garden were sold, and fell into other hands.

There are no surviving descendants of either Danton or Camille Desmoulins, but their names remain in the Pantheon of History. Celebrated historians of the middle of this century have sung their praises. Michelet has made a hero of Danton at the expense of Robespierre, who, however, has found eulogistic defenders in Louis Blanc and Ernest Hamel.

The defence of Danton has been frequently undertaken in an able and thorough manner. Hippolyte Taine, on the other hand, in his well-known work, *Les origines de la France contemporaine* (1881), has accused Danton of having accepted money from Louis XVI. to prevent the rebellion, and using it in the basest manner to aid and abet the revolt of August 1792, and bring it to a successful issue.

L

LOOKING BACK

THE period between the fall of the Dantonists—April 5th—and the fall of Robespierre on July 27th, covered about four months, or a hundred and fourteen days. In our preceding sketches we have already dealt with this interesting epoch, and as a preparation for what is to follow now it is necessary to glance back over what has taken place during these hundred and fourteen days.

The two Committees had conquered; the Hébertists and Dantonists had disappeared: but many secret supporters of both factions were still working on in the dark. The Committee of General Safety manœuvred skilfully to undermine the popularity of Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon, but they had little success in the beginning.

On May 9th Robespierre delivered his famous speech on the relation between religious and moral ideas, and the principles of the Republic, and induced the Convention to acknowledge by decree the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul; thus, another severe blow was struck at Hébertism. Four weeks later, on June 8th, Robespierre was the president of the imposing Festival to the Supreme

Being, when it appeared that the number of his enemies in the Convention and the Committees was on the increase.

Robespierre was hated by some because he was too serious, too respectable. Vicious natures have a secret antipathy to all honourable men; they detest every one who is honest, for they are jealous of his sincerity; they persuade themselves that virtue and good repute are in the end nothing but successful hypocrisy.

Robespierre had induced the Committee to recall those commissioners of the Convention who had become notorious for their excessive violence in the Departments, and he had made, therefore, irreconcilable enemies of Tallien, Fouché, Rovère, Bourdon de l'Oise, Thuriot, Lecointre, Legendre, and Fréron. Tallien especially was most embittered on account of the arrest of Thérézia Cabarrus, whose fate still hung in the balance; while the hostility of Fouché was aroused by Robespierre's strong condemnation of his conduct at Lyons. But notwithstanding the formidable league against him, Robespierre was still dreaded; his popularity in the Convention and with the Jacobins was a stronghold which it was most difficult and dangerous to attack.

The so-called attempt on his life by Cécile Renault had been taken advantage of to undermine his popularity, for this, with Ladmiral's assault on the life of Collot d'Herbois, had been made use of by the Committee of General Safety as a pretext for again sending a large batch of victims to the guillotine.

It has been shown that the intentions of the royalist

girl, Cécile Renault, were far from praiseworthy; but she had done no mischief, and had been arrested on suspicion only. The Committee of General Safety had also caused the arrest of her father, two brothers, and aunt, because portraits of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette had been found in their dwelling. The tutor Cardinal, and the doctor Saintanax, who had spoken in a contemptuous tone about Robespierre a week after the attempt by Ladmiral, were also taken into custody; the same fate befel Pain d'Avoine, who had dined with Ladmiral on May 22nd and 23rd, and a certain Madame Lamartinière, because she was his mistress.

Still the Committee was not satisfied, and did its best to find more victims; and in the spring of 1794, the opinion was current in many quarters that Robespierre was the main cause of the executions.

It is worth noting that the two brothers of Cécile Renault, who were in the army, were not condemned to death. One of them wrote a letter to Robespierre, beginning with the words: "Robespierre, you are generous—intercede for me . . . ;" and although it is not known what Robespierre did for the young soldier, there is little doubt that he was saved by his interference.

The Committee of General Safety represented the assaults by Cécile Renault and Ladmiral as foreign conspiracies, and adroitly connected the wily and ever-escaping Baron de Batz with the matter; thus it also became possible to include some aristocratic prisoners in the amalgamation as his friends—*i.e.*, the Prince de Rohan-Rochefort, Laval de Montmorency,

Count de Pons, Vicomte de Boissaucourt, and de Sombreuil.

Furthermore, the ladies de Saint-Amaranthe, who had absolutely no connection with Cécile Renault, were added to the group; and altogether a miscellaneous collection of forty-eight prisoners was amassed by the Committee of General Safety. All these were to atone with their lives for the attempt on Robespierre—at least, this was the impression which the Committee wished to convey.

Immediately before the trial, on June 10th, Robespierre had conceived the disastrous plan of proposing in the Convention a re-organisation of the Revolutionary Tribunal. By this measure, known as the law of 22 Prairial, Robespierre brought about his downfall. His maxim "Tuer la Terreur par la Terreur" sealed his fate.

At the Festival to the Supreme Being, he had been the recipient of so many threats that he was obliged to arrange some means of self-defence, and therefore commissioned Couthon to propose in the Assembly that every citizen should have the right to bring conspirators or counter-Revolutionists before the judge; and only the Convention, the Committees, and the commissioners in the Departments were empowered to charge accused persons before the Tribunal.

It was said that in this proposal Robespierre's design could be discovered of having deputies arrested by the Committees without a previous decree of the Convention. But this was an exaggeration, for although he could count on the Assembly, he was by no means sure of a majority in the Committees; and this

was clearly proved on the following day, when, after a violent discussion, it was resolved to leave the Convention the sole right of arresting its members. But the administration of justice by the Tribunal was facilitated as much as possible : no more witnesses, no more official defence.

Thus the trial of Cécile Renault and her supposed accomplices could be carried out with the greatest expedition under this new law.

Robespierre's enemies made a shrewd application of the weapon which he himself had given them. The guillotine was removed to the barrière du Tröne, in the eastern part of the town, and the tumbrils drove through the densely populated quarter of the faubourg Saint-Antoine. Some members of the Committee of General Safety and Fouquier-Tinville had ordered that the forty-eight accomplices in the foreign conspiracy should be sent to the scaffold in red shirts, as was usual in the execution of parricides ; and this was ostensibly in honour of Robespierre.

The fearful spectacle—these tumbrils full of men, women, and even girls, clothed all in red, and followed by a number of cannon—could not fail to make the desired impression upon the masses, and many would ask why all these innocent people were to be sacrificed. It was more than evident that several of them were guiltless ; the actress Grand-Maison was condemned for having known Baron de Batz, and with her was a little seamstress, Nicolle, a girl of seventeen, who was accustomed to do her errands.

The law of 22 Prairial yielded very bitter fruit, and Robespierre easily understood that no means would

be spared to make him out as the author of all these death-sentences. In the Committee he was practically alone; Saint-Just was repeatedly sent as deputy in the field to the Northern army; Couthon was nearly always ill. Billaud-Varenne had turned against him since the passing of this new law, and Collot d'Herbois had been persuaded by Fouché that he had made lists of deputies who were shortly to be arrested. He recognised the services and ability of Carnot and Prieur de la Côte d'Or, but received no sympathy from them; and Barère was an egoist the most cunning of all, from whom no assistance need be expected.

He still counted on the majority in the Convention and the full sympathy of the Jacobins, but the future seemed threatening. The star of the *vertueux* Maximilien was in the descendant.

LI

LIGHT AND SHADOW

SINCE the end of 1793, two captains of the engineers, Carnot and Prieur de la Côte d'Or, had been elected as members of the Committee of Public Safety; through their genius, the military operations had been skilfully conducted, and in May 1794 the fortunes of war changed in Belgium. Five commissioners of the Convention—Levasseur, Guyton de Morveau, Goupilleau, Saint-Just, and Le Bas—were stationed on the Sambre and the Meuse. Saint-Just exercised the most authority; all breaches of discipline, the least signs of cowardice or treason, were punished with the utmost severity. He thought that a battle could be won by patriotic enthusiasm, and under-estimated the value of military skill, but he showed a personal courage which won him the esteem of all his soldiers; the generals, on the other hand, were dissatisfied with his control.

In June, Carnot sent sixteen thousand men from the Rhine army under Jourdan to Belgium to attack Namur and Liège, and operations were now continued with redoubled vigour. The Northern army numbered eighty thousand men and a hundred and thirty guns; the left wing was under Kléber, the right under

Marceau, while Jourdan held the supreme command. The enemies of the Republic had likewise a very powerful force in Belgium, but the co-operation of the allies left much to be desired. The Prussian army on the Rhine did not support the English and Dutch; the Austrian Emperor knew that his rule was hated in Belgium, and that the population would prefer a French protectorate.

The Austrians spoke of peace, thought that Robespierre would soon put an end to the Reign of Terror, and pointed out that, by his decree, which recognised the existence of the Divinity, he was adopting a more moderate policy.

Ypres was taken by General Moreau on June 17th; Bruges and Tournay received and welcomed the French on June 24th; Charleroi was besieged, and surrendered unconditionally on the following day. The 26th was the date of the victory of Fleurus. The troops of the Prince of Coburg and William Frederick, Prince of Orange (William I.), numbering eighty thousand men, faced Jourdan with his army of seventy-six thousand. Bernadotte, Marceau, and Kléber, forced the Prince of Orange and his army to retreat, and at seven o'clock in the evening the Austrians, under Coburg, followed the example of the Dutch; and thus the whole of Belgium fell into the hands of the French Republic.

Four weeks earlier, a French fleet, under Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse and Jean-Bon-Saint-André, had prevented the English, under Howe, from seizing a large convoy of ships with American grain and merchandise. The French fleet was defeated, but the transports of

corn, so urgently needed, arrived safely in the French harbours.

At this battle a well-known incident took place. The frigate, *le Vengeur*, riddled with English bullets, was slowly sinking ; the whole crew crowded on to the upper deck, binding every scrap of tricolour to the bulwarks, lest the French flag should remain floating, and down they went, waving their caps, brave, resolute, heroic—down, down to their deep grave, the echoes of "Vive la République!" "Vive la France!" lingering faintly on the wide expanse of ocean.

Paris rejoiced at such heroism ; but the political situation grew more and more dangerous. The epoch of the Grande Terreur had begun. The law of 22 Prairial was actively enforced by the Committee of General Safety. In Prairial, 509 executions took place ; in Messidor (June 19th—July 18th), 796 ; and from 1 to 9 Thermidor, 342.

Robespierre was obliged to own that this law had been a very risky undertaking. When Saint-Just returned from Belgium after the battle of Fleurus, he found that his friend's position had much declined. The absurd trial of Cathérine Théot had taken place in the interval, and had been used as a means of making Robespierre unpopular. In the Convention, the report of Vadier on this matter caused a great deal of hilarity at the expense of the Jacobin leader, who had used all his power to prevent the execution of these fanatics ; and to be laughed at is fatal for a politician.

In the Committees, as well as in the Convention, a growing prejudice against Robespierre was manifest-

ing itself. He was hated because he had expressed his dissatisfaction at the cruelties perpetrated by the Commissioners in the Departments. Saint-Just joined his side, with his iron will and strength of character, and hence the rupture in the Committees when both of them insisted on punishing the misdeeds of the Commissioners. The Jacobins alone remained faithful, and supported his complaints by their motions.

But as the Republic continued to prosper in the battle-field, the gaols were more and more crowded with suspects. It is remarkable that the prisons of the Terreur were so curiously arranged. Some of them, like la Conciergerie, la Force, Sainte-Pélagie and les Madelonnettes, were terrible, and contained dark cells. But in the Luxembourg, les Carmes, les Bénédictins-anglais, and Saint-Lazare (the last three were originally convents) the prisoners of both sexes walked in the fine gardens, and tried to forget their captivity amidst lively and gallant discourse. This was especially the case in the Luxembourg, where many ladies of rank were confined with their maids and other servants. The prisoners met in the evening in a large hall, where they passed their time pleasantly with chatting, writing, and music.

On June 15th the Parisian prisons contained 7321 inmates, and, in spite of the many executions, there were 7800 on July 27th.

On Robespierre's withdrawal from the sittings of the Committee, the number of arrests and executions was increased with redoubled zeal. In the beginning of Thermidor the Committee ordered numerous victims to be tried by the Tribunal. On 1 Thermidor

(July 19th), fourteen accused persons were sent to that court; but the signature of Robespierre did not appear. Forty-eight more, and shortly afterwards as many as three hundred, were summoned to the bar of Fouquier-Tinville, on July 21st; and the names of Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon, did not figure on the documents. Cambon, a very clever financier, whose abilities were of great service to the Republic in the extremely complicated state of the finances, was a staunch supporter of the Terreur, and the following remark of his is recorded: "You want to discharge your obligations? Guillotine! You want to meet the enormous expenses of your armies? Guillotine! You want to pay your incalculable debts? Guillotine! guillotine!"[1]

During these terrible days, the Tribunal was completely under the rule of the Committee of General Safety, especially some bitter enemies of Robespierre—Amar, Vadier, Vouland, Jagot. They did their best to make corpses of the prisoners in as short a time as possible. An assistant of the Tribunal was accused; arrested at five o'clock in the morning; sent to the Conciergerie at seven; his indictment read at nine; appeared in the court-room at ten; sentenced to death at two; guillotined at four.

At last the executions became so common that very little notice was taken of them. Women wore little earrings in the shape of guillotines; and the following anecdote is related of a soldier.

After eating a hearty breakfast, he lit his pipe with his act of accusation, and said to his fellow-prisoners:

[1] Laurent Lecointre, *Au Peuple français* (1794), p. 195.

"Now that we have had a good breakfast, we must think of our supper, and you must give me the address of a restaurant in the other world, where I may have a good meal prepared for you."

It was easy to foresee that this state of things could not be of long duration; the tension was too great. And since Robespierre and his supporters seemed to have renounced all influence on the course of events, everything looked more and more dismal and threatening.

And this possibly accounts for the last effort of the once popular leader to rouse the Convention to action —an attempt which was destined to fail miserably, as will shortly appear.

LII

THE STORY OF BARRAS

WE must pause here to make mention of a tradition which later gave cause for the most unauthentic stories.

Barras—a friend of Tallien and Fréron—who was destined to become a member of the Directoire, communicated the following to Cabarrus, the father of Madame Tallien.

On July 25th, 1794, a group of Robespierre's enemies had assembled to dine in the garden of Ledoyen at the Champs Elysées; they were Barras, Fréron, Tallien, Rovère, Ysabeau, Dubois-Crancé, and Javogues. At nine o'clock in the evening, Robespierre, his brother, Saint-Just, Le Bas, David, and the composer Méhul, arrived at the same restaurant; and when they saw their political opponents seated at tables in the open air, they went inside for supper. Barras watched them, and as the doors had been thrown open, he tried to follow, as far as possible, the conversation of Robespierre and his friends.

They first spoke of a certain Chapelier, a sculptor of the boulevard Saint-Antoine, who at that time was selling statues representing Liberty, Reason, and Equality David stated his opinion that these were the works of a master; but when Robespierre asked him whether

they were the works of a good citizen, he admitted that it was a little doubtful. Robespierre hereupon declared that every true artist, who was at the same time a good citizen, ought to derive his inspirations from philosophy. The conversation then turned on the festival of the first decadi of Thermidor (10 Thermidor, July 28th), which was dedicated to two brave soldiers—Barra and Viala—who had displayed great courage whilst in the agony of death. Méhul was to compose the music of a cantata to the verses of an unknown poet, citizen Davrigny.

Robespierre asked why Marie Joseph Chenier had not written the verses, to which Saint-Just replied that he had joined the club of the "mécontents." Every one knew that his brother André—a royalist poet of great genius—had been executed that morning, and, as all remained silent, Robespierre remarked that Plato was quite right in banishing the poets from the Republic, to which Saint-Just replied that there were quite enough poets, les citoyens Andrieux, Trouvé, and others.

Several verses had been sent to Robespierre to serve for the festival of Barra and Viala, but to show at what a low point this amateur poetry then stood we will quote the first stanza of Andrieux' cantata :

"Voyez au bord de la Durance
Viala s'armer et marcher !
Cruels ennemis de la France
Seul il vous défend d'approcher,
Son âme courageuse et forte
En mourant garde sa fierté ;
Ils me n'ont pas manqué les traîtres, mais qu'importe,
Je meurs pour la patrie et pour la liberté."

And on the same day André Chenier had written the following excellent lines, a moment before he was called to take his place in the guillotine-cart :

"Comme un dernier rayon, comme un dernier zéphyre
Anime la fin d'un beau jour,
Au pied de l'échafaud j'essaye encore ma lyre,
Peut-être est-ce bientôt mon tour;
Peut-être avant que l'heure en cercle promenée
Ait posé sur l'émail brillant,
Dans les soixante pas où sa route est bornée,
Son pied sonore et vigilant—
Le sommeil du tombeau pressera ma paupière !
Avant que de ses deux moitiés
Ce vers que je commence, ait atteint la dernière. . . .
Peut-être en ces murs effrayés,
Le messager de mort, noir récruteur des ombres
Escorté d'infames soldats,
Remplira de mon nom ces long corridors sombres. . . ."

Here the poet had to leave off—he was summoned to mount the tumbril.

The company at Ledoyen continued the conversation about the festival of 10 Thermidor—the day which would see only two of them among the living, David and Méhul. The former had taken upon himself to arrange the festivities. The busts of Barra and Viala were to be carried with the standards in front of the procession; forty-eight children were to carry the urn of Viala, for he had joined the army while quite young, as a drummer-boy; and forty-eight mothers were to bear the remains of Barra. The members of the Convention were to join the procession, for the purpose of installing these two urns in a place of honour in the Panthéon.

After this the conversation turned on Barère,

Tallien, and other opponents of Robespierre; but as it was held in whispers, on account of the near vicinity of the enemy, Barras was unable to follow it further.

He then joined in the discussion between Tallien and Fréron. The latter remarked that the dinner left much to be desired, to which Tallien replied that he had, no doubt, inherited the gift of criticism from his father. Louis Stanislas Fréron was the son of Elie Catharine Fréron, who had sharply criticized Voltaire in his periodical *L'année littéraire.*

Tallien said further that if he were not careful he would soon dine in the other world, upon which Fréron recited, in a subdued tone, the following verse:

"Lorsque arrivés au bord du fleuve Phlégéton,
Camille Desmoulins, d'Eglantine, et Danton,
Payèrent, pour passer cet endroit réquitable,
Le nautonnier Caron, citoyen redoutable,
A ces trois messagers voulut remettre en mains
L'exédant de la taxe imposée aux humains:
—'Garde,' lui dit Danton, 'la somme tout entière,
Ce sera pour Couthon, Saint-Just, et Robespierre.'"

Tallien, who was much agitated, laughed hysterically; he had received, the same morning, a letter from Thérézia Cabarrus, in the following words:

"La citoyenne Fontenay, au citoyen Tallien,
"rue de la Perle, 17.

"The police magistrate has just left here: he came to inform me that I am to appear to-morrow at the Tribunal; that means the scaffold. This does not resemble the dream which I had last night; Robespierre did not exist any more, and the prisons were open—but, thanks to your base cowardice, there will soon be nobody left in France able to fulfil this dream."

A few moments afterwards Tallien noticed Collot d'Herbois, who was seated at a table by himself. He invited him to join his party, and a little later the company went to the Place de la Révolution to take their coffee at a café on the left bank of the river.

Robespierre and his friends had already left, but at the large statue of Liberty the two parties met. Barras spoke some polite words to Robespierre, who seemed surprised at the encounter. Augustin replied for his brother. Tallien declared enthusiastically that all good citizens should clasp hands and sacrifice their personal prejudices at the monument of Freedom. Saint-Just told him that it was easy to talk of making offers, but they, who had dishonoured the Republic by their misdeeds, should begin by pronouncing judgment upon themselves.

Barras replied that it was always the same old charge against the Commissioners of the Convention, and David attempted to quiet them all with a line of Corneille :

"'Soyons maîtres de nous comme de l'univers.'"

He remarked that the armies of the Republic were everywhere triumphant, but Robespierre replied that the number of traitors in Paris increased, and they ought never to forget that they were living in a storm.

"Well then," said David, "remain at the helm, and let us all be friends and brothers to save the ship of State."

Robespierre maintained that only the true Republicans should remain at the helm, upon which Tallien hurled at him the remark that he was master everywhere—in the Commune, in the Convention, at the Committees, amongst the Jacobins.

Robespierre forcibly denied this. Barras reproached him for having made a list of deputies who were to be disposed of, and demanded that he should tear it to pieces at the foot of the monument. Robespierre seemed inclined to do this; but when Tallien also asked him to liberate citoyenne Fontenay, he refused emphatically, and the conversation came to an abrupt end.

This is the tradition, which arose from the communication of Barras.[1]

Is there any truth in it?

There is little doubt that on July 25th Barras dined with his friends at Ledoyen. This we may accept as true; but it is difficult to decide whether Robespierre really appeared there as well. Still, it is probable. He had just finished a lengthy speech, which he intended to deliver in the Convention on the next day, so it is presumable that he took a walk with his friends, to lighten his despondency. But the rest of the story seems to have been concocted. Ernest Hamel, Louis Blanc, and Michelet, have conclusively proved that Robespierre never made lists of suspected deputies. The incident on the Place de la Révolution was manufactured to a large extent by Barras; everything relating to Thérézia Cabarrus is pure fiction; the meeting at Ledoyen only has a semblance of truth.

However, some details show so much local colour that they deserve our attention; but it is necessary to distinguish truth from fiction.

[1] A full account is given by Arsène Housaye in *Notre Dame de Thermidor, Histoire de Madame Tallien* (1864).

LIII

THE LAST EFFORT OF ROBESPIERRE

ROBESPIERRE was shrewd enough to understand that the guillotine would lose its prestige. It was impossible to continue the daily sacrifices of crowds of political opponents at the scaffold. The Revolutionary Tribunal worked with all the expedition which the law of 22 Prairial had rendered possible. During the first days of Thermidor, many ladies of rank had been sent to the guillotine. Their only offence was their birth, but, as a rule, they were accused of having plotted for the deliverance of the royal family.

On July 19th the following were guillotined: Madame de Bourbonne, aged thirty-one; the Countess Hervé Faudoas, aged eighteen; further, Madame de la Suderic-Gamory; Madame Dacier de Saint-Priest; Madame de Lauradour; Madame du Plessis-Lamertière, Madame du Plessis-Chamborand.

On July 20th Madame Dutheil and her maid Zolla were taken by the tumbrils; on the 21st, Madame Montarly was accused of "having spoken against liberty and the people." On the 22nd, two ladies de Noailles, Madame Dayen, the wife of an *émigré*, and Madame de Laroche-Lupy, were executed. A large number of nobles died on the 23rd, among

FOUQUIER-TINVILLE, THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR. [*To face p.* 31

them the Prince de Montbazon-Rohan, the German Prince von Salm-Kirburg, General de Beauharnais—whose wife was likewise a prisoner—Count de Querhoent, and many others, who were convicted of "having declared themselves enemies of the people by participation in the conspiracies of Capet, his wife and ministers, *et des chevaliers du poignard* (money-hunters).

On July 24th and 25th another group was sent to the guillotine: the widow of Desfieux; the Baroness Soyecourt; Madame Pigray (twenty-seven years old); the former abbess of Montmartre (seventy-two years old); and Berengère, wife of the former duke de Beauvilliers, whose husband also died on the 25th. The life of the Duchess de Saint-Aignau was spared when she declared herself pregnant; in similar cases the execution was always delayed, and after July 27th such a reprieve was equal to an escape from the scaffold.

On July 26th the hairdresser of Marie-Antoinette was decapitated for having dressed the hair of the Queen with a white cockade.

Robespierre desired to reform this state of affairs. He wished to apply the extreme severity of the law to counter-Revolutionist conspirators, but at the same time to exert himself against the Terrorists, who were causing the death of innocent people. It was, indeed, a difficult task. He began by speaking to this effect in the Jacobin Club, and complained there of being held responsible for the death-sentences of the Revolutionary Tribunal. In the meeting on July 1st he described his position as follows:

"They say in Paris that it is I who organized the Revolutionary Tribunal, to murder the members of the Convention. I am described as an oppressor of the national representatives; in London it is stated that we concoct sham assassinations in France, as a pretext for surrounding me with a military guard. It is likewise said here that the case of Cécile Rénault was surely a love affair of mine, because I had her lover guillotined. This is how tyrants are absolved by attacking an isolated patriot, who only possesses his courage and his virtue."

At that moment a voice from the gallery cried:

"Robespierre, tu as tous les Français pour toi."

Robespierre was particularly grieved that so many simple, thoughtless, and misguided people from the lower classes were being guillotined as political offenders. It is remarkable that, according to statistics, the greater number of those who ended their lives by Dr. Guillotin's instrument belonged to the masses. In the country six thousand farmers were taken to the scaffold; in the towns more than two thousand working-men, against seven hundred nobles and twelve hundred priests.

Robespierre relied most on the Jacobins, who had supported him since 1789. During the sittings in the beginning of July, it was shown, over and over again, that this club was faithful to him, and some touching incidents frequently took place.

Attempts were made to separate the two brothers, and Augustin exclaimed, at one of the meetings:

"They have tried to separate me from my brother; they have even told me that I was superior to him.

But be he never so great a champion of morality, and terror to the wicked, I have but one ambition, the glory of sharing his tomb."

Couthon added that he would gladly receive the dagger-thrusts which were destined for Robespierre, and all the Jacobins applauded.

But his enemies became more and more bitter. Barère, who intrigued secretly against him in the Committee, was an unprincipled individual, and owned a villa at Clichy, where twice every decade he entertained Vadier and Vouland, the most violent members of the Committee of General Safety; here they indulged in political conspiracies and all kinds of excesses.[1]

Villate, juror of the Revolutionary Tribunal, communicated this fact, and added:

"I saw, with joy and rapture, the destruction of the scandalous court of Louis XVI. and the Archduchess of Austria, and I have witnessed the revival of the nightly scenes in the gardens of Versailles and little Trianon, among the very destroyers of that shameful court."

Carnot, one of the worthiest members of the Committee, likewise joined the party against Robespierre; this was due to his quarrel with Saint-Just, who, in his capacity as Commissioner to the Northern Army, had omitted to execute some of his commands, maintaining that they would ruin everything.

When Saint-Just returned after the battle of Fleurus, he saw at once that he must not leave his bosom friend

[1] Villate, *Causes secrètes de la Révolution du 9 au 10 Thermidor*, pp. 184, 185.

Robespierre alone; and, by his presence, the secret opposition and stratagems of the Committee members, Barère, Collot d'Herbois, and Billaud-Varenne, were checked.

On May 24th, two days after the arrest of Thérézia Cabarrus, Tallien had laid the foundations of a plot to which Courtois, Barère, Laurent-Lecointre, and Guffroy, belonged from the outset; but a little later the most influential members of the two Committees gradually joined them.

Still, many deputies took the part of Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon, for various reasons: seventy-three members of the Convention, who had supported the Girondins, were saved by Robespierre at the time when their arrest was demanded; Augustin Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Le Bas, had liberated thousands of prisoners in the Departments; Couthon had behaved with humanity and moderation in Lyons, in sharp contrast to the cruel, heartless Fouché and Collot d'Herbois.

It was therefore the object of Robespierre's opponents to frighten the members of the Convention with the imaginary lists of suspected deputies; and they succeeded to a large extent. Couthon spoke in the Jacobin Club against this absurd panic among the representatives, and stated that he and his friends had the deepest respect for the National Assembly, were full of zeal for its glory, and ready to shed their blood in its cause; he declared also that amongst the members were certain "*hommes impurs*"; but he did not mention their names.

This was a great mistake. The sword of Damocles

hung over the heads of many, who willingly gave ear to all kinds of insinuations, and fully realised that only by a strong and united opposition would their safety be assured.

And so dawned the day when honourable men were moved by egoism and secret terror to send such excellent citizens as Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon, to the scaffold.

LIV

CALUMNY

THE efforts of his enemies to slander Robespierre, prove that his name was much respected until 9 Thermidor.

Barras, formerly Count de Barras, stated, on August 14th, 1794, that Robespierre had kept many mistresses at his country house, Monçeau, and that Saint-Just and Couthon also owned villas, le Raincy and Bagatelle.

The origin of this base libel was an accusation made by some inhabitants of Maisons-Alfort, against a friend of Robespierre, a wealthy merchant, Deschamps, who owned a villa at that place. Robespierre had occasionally been his guest, and these simple visits had been construed by the inhabitants of the village into assemblies of Robespierre, Deschamps, Hanriot, and some officers of the National Guards, where all kinds of orgies were indulged in.

It is remarkable that many representatives in the Convention, who had been witnesses of his honourable and blameless life, never took up the cudgels for their former leader, when Barras came forward with his ingenious falsehood.

Barras, like Barère, was a libertine, who demurred nothing; and when he became a member of the

Directoire, he occasioned much anxiety to General Bonaparte, after his marriage with the widow of General Beauharnais. Another deputy, the infamous Courtois, spoke in a similar way in his *Rapport sur les événements du 9 Thermidor*, doing his utmost to villify Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon.

He had been a bosom friend of Danton, and as he believed that it was Robespierre and not Billaud-Varenne and the Committee of General Safety who had sent his idol to the scaffold, he thought to avenge himself thus; besides this, he had another reason for slandering his late enemy. On July 30th, 1793, he had been called by Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Prieur de la Marne, to the Committee, to defend himself against an accusation. It was asserted that he had helped himself to the property of the State during a mission to Belgium; but as this could not be proved, he was left in peace.

At Robespierre's death he was charged with the duty of examining his papers, and twice he gave a false report. Firstly, on January 5th, 1795, when a very extensive work of four hundred and eight pages appeared, treating of the various letters and documents left by Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon. Secondly, on July 26th, 1795, referring to the events of 9 Thermidor. The first report is divided into two parts, the report itself and the documentary proofs. It is universally acknowledged that Courtois acted dishonestly,[1] and this report has been the source from which later historians of the reaction have drawn in representing Robespierre as the

[1] See article *Courtois* in the *Biographie Universelle*.

cause of all the atrocities committed during the Reign of Terror.

The work of Courtois was written in a very foolish and inflated style: "Le style emphatique et déclamatoire va jusqu'au ridicule," says the *Biographie Universelle.*

It has been conclusively proved that many of Robespierre's letters were purposely kept back to suppress anything which might be said to his honour. A collection of letters from the Girondins, General Hoche, and Augustin Robespierre, existed at the time, and were either sold, stolen, or destroyed by Courtois. In 1816 he was obliged to flee to Belgium, and when his house was ransacked, some of these documents were discovered and preserved for historical research. As Courtois had sold a great many, various letters addressed to Robespierre were afterwards found amongst private collections.

Dissatisfaction was expressed in the Convention at this report, as it only dealt with such matters as were to Robespierre's disadvantage. He was in the habit of receiving letters from the Departments, containing complaints of violence, which is a conclusive proof that he was looked upon as just and moderate.

An extraordinary letter was lately published, which was nothing less than a declaration of love from an eccentric citoyenne of Nantes.[1]

"My dear Robespierre,—I have loved you since the beginning of the Revolution, but I was bound and had to conquer my passion. But now that, through

[1] G. Lenotre, *Paris révolutionnaire* (1895), p. 27.

the death of my husband in the Vendée war, I have once more become free, I will make you this confession before the Supreme Being.

"I flatter myself, my dear Robespierre, that you will be sensible of the avowal which I now make. It is not easy for a woman to make such a declaration, but paper is patient, and at a distance one blushes less than face to face. "You are my supreme divinity, and I know no other in this world but you; you are my guardian angel; I wish to live only under your laws, they are so good; and I swear to you that, should you be as free as I, I will become yours for life.

"I offer you as a dowry all the true qualities of a good Republican woman, and an income of forty thousand francs. I am a young widow of twenty-two years.

"I beg of you to reply, if this offer suits you, to Widow Jakin, Poste Restante, Nantes. I pray you to direct your reply poste restante, as I am afraid that my mother might be annoyed with me for my forwardness. If I should be fortunate enough to receive a favourable answer, I will hasten to show it to her, for then I shall have nothing more to hide.

"Adieu, my well-beloved. Think of the little Nantaise, and of that unfortunate city which is so much afflicted by the scourge of war. As your merits give you much influence in the Assembly, will you not do your best to deliver us from our distress? I do not speak for myself, but for all brave Sansculottes and good citizens. I beseech you, do reply to me, as otherwise I shall be afraid

of becoming troublesome with my letters. Once more, good-bye. Think of poor me, who lives for you only. Do not use the seal of the Convention when replying, but write in your private capacity."

This strange letter provokes a smile, in the midst of the grossest libel and slander, with which Courtois blackened the memory of Robespierre; for all such missives as contained the writer's sympathy for him were construed into accusations. For example, Courtois called citizen Félix suspect because he had expressed a desire to make the acquaintance of a good man like Robespierre. Others were declared suspect because they had christened their children Maximilien; and for this reason: Courtois maintained Robespierre could only be a rogue—so much honour could not be lavished upon really deserving people.

But Courtois went much further in support of his libels. He mentioned, in his report, a number of letters which prove nothing—merely anonymous communications, which any honest man would treat with contempt. These are the documents in which some expressions occur far from favourable to Robespierre's memory; but they are of no importance, as they seem to have been written by intriguers or lunatics.

And worse than all this is the slander by the unknown authors of an *Histoire de la Révolution par deux amis de la liberté*. They affirm that Robespierre spent his nights in a splendid castle, filled with "*femmes galantes*," and that here he signed his death-sentences, [illegible]ing of having sent nearly six thousand Parisians

to the guillotine. It is much to be regretted that some historians, without a critical eye for truth, have repeated all these senseless charges, with the result that a tradition has gradually arisen, representing Robespierre as a despicable monster—while it was by the strictness of his moral conduct that he distinguished himself amidst the gross immorality which was rife in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century.

LV

THE FIRST DAYS OF THERMIDOR

DURING the last days of July 1794, the temperature in Paris was excessively high, besides which, the political thermometer stood at boiling point. Not a day passed without executions; the number of victims was continually on the increase. The true terrorist of the Committee of Public Safety was Billaud-Varenne, who thus expressed his conviction:

"The worst traitor to his country is he who, whilst keeping guard in the Committee of Public Safety, fails to hurl the thunderbolt which the people have put in his hands for the destruction of their enemies."

Robespierre declined to sign any more lists of prisoners who were to be committed before the Revolutionary Tribunal. On July 21st some of these lists, containing three hundred and eighteen names, were submitted for his signature; he refused to sign, but his colleagues in the Committee—Collot d'Herbois, C. A. Prieur, Billaud-Varenne, and Barère, besides Vadier, Vouland, Elie Lacoste, Ruhl, and Amar, of the Committee of General Safety, did not hesitate to place their names to the documents.

His signature is but very rarely met with on the various mandates of the executive, and he intended

to complain in his last speech in the Convention of the manner in which this unreasonable violence was placing the Revolution in a suspicious light to the people.

The minister Garat, who was member of the Conseil des Anciens in 1799, stated in the Assembly, on August 1st of that year, that the responsibility of all the bloody executions during the Reign of Terror rested solely with Billaud-Varenne.

This would-be dramatist had something austere and gloomy in his appearance, which was attributed by some to his studies in a Jesuit monastery, but is better explained by his false and double-faced character. He secretly joined the league of Tallien, Fouché, Fréron, Rovère, Barras, and Courtois—a mistake of which he afterwards repented. When banished to Cayenne, he acknowledged his error, and called his participation in the conspiracy of July 27th *sa deplorable faute*, adding:

"I repeat it, the Puritan Revolution was lost on 9 Thermidor. How many times have I not lamented that, in my anger, I took part in it!"[1]

According to him, therefore, the fall of Robespierre and his friends was a death-blow to the Republic.

After this event, the Jeunesse dorée, the Incroyables, and the secret royalists, began to undo all that had been accomplished by the Convention. The good Parisians could not suppress their capricious taste for novelties any longer. They were tired of the Revolutionary gravity, of the Revolutionary bloodshed—

[1] *Billaud-Varenne à Cayenne, par le général Bernard; Nouvelle Minerve*, I., p. 351.

they were longing for their former pleasant, happy life; they wanted to dance and sing, and give themselves up once more to gaiety and merriment; no more tocsins, no more drum-beating in front of the Revolutionary Committees, no more barbarity and outrage.

One fatal circumstance in this Thermidor conspiracy was, that able men, like Carnot, did not remain neutral. His great military talents enabled him to do wonders, and Robespierre and Saint-Just were just the men who criticised his work; while Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois, on the other hand, showed great sympathy for him. Robespierre reproached him with treating patriotic generals unjustly, and Saint-Just maintained that he had frequently ignored the wishes of the deputies in the field. On 9 Thermidor the latter stated: "Only those who take part in the battles win them, and only those who are powerful profit by them."

Similar home truths, and the fact that the patriotic enthusiasm and bravery of Saint-Just had greatly contributed to the glorious victory at Fleurus, were no doubt additional causes of embitterment to Carnot; he had never cherished much admiration for Robespierre, who, although his junior, was decidedly more popular than himself.

It was Fouché, in particular, who agitated Carnot against Robespierre; but nothing could be done as yet to bring down the idol of the Jacobins, the most celebrated man in Paris. Something was sought for which would have a superficial semblance of truth, and with this purpose the rumour was spread

that he aimed at the dictatorship, or at a triumvirate to be formed—on the Roman model—by himself and his two friends. But in reality the other members of the Committee acted as true dictators, particularly Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois.

Robespierre had withdrawn from the discussions of the Committee, Couthon was frequently indisposed, and Saint-Just was continually absent as deputy in the field. On the evening of July 21st Couthon spoke in the Jacobin Club about the false rumour that Robespierre was throwing suspicion on the members of the Convention, and said :

"No one respects and honours the Convention more than we do. We are all of us ready to shed our life-blood for it, a thousand times. Moreover, we all of us honour justice and virtue, and I declare, for my part, that there is no human power which can impose silence on me whenever I see justice and virtue outraged."

The usual inflated style of the Jacobins ; but there cannot be a moment's doubt of Couthon's sincerity.

Augustin, Robespierre's noble brother, spoke in the same spirit, declaring fearlessly that he belonged to the moderate party.

"Yes ! I am a moderate, if you understand as such a citizen who is not satisfied with proclaiming the principles of morals and justice, but who wishes for their application, or a man who saves oppressed innocence at the cost of his reputation."

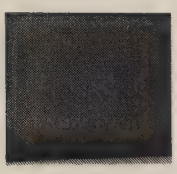
But the members of the Committee of General Safety, who were nearly all hostile to Robespierre, did

their best to persuade the Right in the Convention to join their party. These were nearly all friends of the Girondins; they were well aware that Robespierre and his followers had distinguished themselves by their struggle for morality and respectability—but with him democracy and the Republic would triumph; and this they did not relish.

The principal members of this party at that time were: Boissy d'Anglas, Siéyès, and Durand-Maillane; they were anxious for the end of the Reign of Terror, and horrified at the sight of sixty or eighty heads daily sacrificed to the guillotine. The conspirators consulted the Right, as has been declared by Durand-Maillane in his Memoirs. There was still another party in the Convention, between the Right and the Mountain, called la Plaine, who formed a group of members rather than a party, and always went with the strongest; among them, also, the conspirators secured allies.

Robespierre was fully aware of the league that was formed against him, but still he remained inactive. He relied on most of the Parisian Sections, on the Commune and the Jacobins, and likewise thought to be justified in counting on the National Guards, which were under the command of his friend, General Hanriot.

This singular personage, who had come to the surface at the disturbances with the Girondins (May 31st, 1793) greatly admired the Jacobin hero, and was noted for his able interference in riots, especially at street fights in front of the bakers' shops. His daily orders were moderate and patriotic in their



tendency; he prevented the rough treatment of prisoners, and objected to the carrying of arms by the Parisian volunteers at public festivals.

"A free people is its own police; it has no need of an armed force to maintain justice," he wrote in his "*ordre du jour*," of November 9th, 1793.

Yet, later, everything was done in many quarters to represent him as a half-witted drunkard, who did not shrink from all kinds of excesses.

LVI

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE CONVENTION ON JULY 22ND AND 23RD, AND THE CONSEQUENCES THEREOF.

ROBESPIERRE still appeared in the assembly hall of the Committee of Public Safety, but refrained from taking part in the discussions; almost the entire Government was carried on by Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, and Carnot.

Efforts were made to effect a reconciliation with Robespierre, and on July 22nd the two Committees held a joint meeting, at which Saint-Just was instructed to report on the general position of the Republic; and this was no doubt intended as an advance to Robespierre. Saint-Just's enthusiasm for the people and liberty reached a height to which even his friend was unable to follow him. . . . "Everything that does not resemble the purest love for the people and liberty will have my hatred," was his favourite saying; and in many things he was far more extreme than Robespierre.

He had as many admirers as his colleague, and from the citoyennes especially this young and handsome deputy received numerous proofs of sympathy. No wonder, therefore, that he paid great attention to his appearance; on the day of his fall he wore a pale

yellow coat, an enormous white scarf, and light-grey trousers.[1]

On July 23rd the two Committees again held a joint meeting, and the object was once more to come to a better understanding. Before Robespierre's enemies dared to attack him openly in the Convention, an attempt was made at the last moment to effect a bond between himself and Carnot, Billaud-Varenne, and Collot d'Herbois, as his support in the Commune, Convention, and Jacobin Club, was still formidable.

When Robespierre was asked at this sitting for the cause of his withdrawal from the Government, he declared his dissatisfaction at the course of affairs, and drew attention to the outrages committed by Fouché, Tallien, and Carrier, in the Departments. Before these deliberations began there had been a painful silence; Saint-Just had spoken first, relating an incident which had happened to him a short while before in Belgium. A Swiss officer had been taken prisoner at Maubeuge, who had been examined by him. This foreigner maintained that the allied powers were hoping for a change in the home policy of France. They relied on a rupture in the democratic party, and on a strong and powerful agitation against the policy of the Terreur. It was not unknown in the army of *émigrés* that the enemies of Robespierre were conspiring to overthrow the Committee of Public Safety. Saint-Just added that some members of the Committee had been accused of aiming at the dictatorship, and persisted that this rumour was absolutely groundless; would-be dictators generally assured themselves before-

[1] G. Lenotre, *Paris révolutionnaire* (1875), p. 126.

hand of the military power and the finances of the Republic which they wished to overthrow, while this was far from being the case in the present instance.

Every one understood that he was referring to his friend Robespierre.

Billaud-Varenne suddenly addressed himself to the latter, and said: "Nous sommes tous tes amis, nous avons toujours marché ensemble." Billaud was false and suspicious, but, as a staunch democrat and Terrorist, he could not do without the assistance of Robespierre. He wavered between him and the future Thermidorians, and afterwards greatly regretted his choice of the latter.

In the same meeting, the decision of the previous night was confirmed, by which Saint-Just was entrusted with the task of reporting on the position of the Republic.

Matters had no doubt improved, but a complete reconciliation had not been accomplished. As soon as they heard this, Tallien, Fouché, and their companions, hastened to distribute lists amongst the deputies, with the names of thirty of their colleagues who had been selected by Robespierre for the guillotine; and other measures with the same purpose were taken. The volunteer artillery, to which the most patriotic citizens belonged, was chosen by Carnot to be sent to the front.

Great excitement prevailed among the Jacobins; Couthon spoke repeatedly in their evening sittings on July 22nd and 24th, and referred to some five or six members of the Convention "whose hands were soiled with the blood of the innocents whom they had sacrificed," proposing that the club should send a

petition to the National Assembly, in which the wishes and grievances of the brethren should be communicated. This was done on July 25th; the petition was entirely in the manner of Robespierre, mentioning some very dangerous members of the Convention, and professing the utmost respect for the sovereign legislative, as was apparent from the concluding sentence: "With you—members of the Convention—the virtuous and confiding people will brave their enemies; they will sacrifice their lives to their duty and glory by honouring and defending their representatives."

Dubois-Crancé, one of the members, hastened to the tribune, and in his speech once more confirmed the truth of the saying: "*Qui s'excuse s'accuse.*" His actions at Lyons had been severely condemned by Robespierre, and he had been expelled from the Jacobin Club; hence he cordially detested Maximilien, and tried to annoy him by christening Eléonore Duplay, his *fiancée*, Cornélie Copeau (woodshaving), a reference to her father's profession of cabinet-maker.

Barère, who spoke after Dubois-Crancé, thought proper to eulogize Robespierre, whilst secretly intending to ruin him and his friends.

But the conspirators knew their business, and continued to work on the members of the Right. At the residence of Collot d'Herbois, meetings were held to arrange the plan of campaign; Fouché, who played the part of spy admirably, was constantly coming with fresh information, and on July 26th joyfully exclaimed:

"The division is complete. To-morrow we must strike."

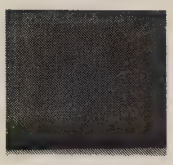
Meanwhile, Robespierre was busy preparing the speech by which he wished to proclaim his just rights against the conspirators.

A tradition exists that during the last days of July he often went to Ermenonville, where Jean-Jacques was buried, and that there he wrote his last oration; but the statement has not been proved. He once made a pilgrimage to the tomb of his idolized master during his younger days, and this possibly accounts for the above tradition.

It is clear, from the minutes of the Committee of Public Safety, that he was in Paris during the first days of Thermidor, when, after meals, he walked to the Champs Elysées, either with his dog Bruant or accompanied by the Duplays; Eléonore was his most frequent companion, and with her he did his best to forget the dangers of the impending crisis. He probably worked at his speech from the 21st to the 25th of July. Léonard Gallois, in his learned work on the Convention, has related Robespierre's words on the evening of July 25th.[1] He does not seem to have doubted the success of his speech with the members of the Assembly. Vain illusion, which has possessed so many great pleaders before this honest statesman, and which again and again rises in noble hearts! . . . Vain illusion!

He went for a walk on the evening of July 25th with his secretary Nicholas Duplay, called Duplay à la jambe de bois, as he had lost his left leg when a young soldier at the cannonade of Valmy. They strolled to the Champs Elysées; lost in thought,

[1] *Histoire de la Convention nationale*, VII., p. 216.



the hero of the Jacobins was calculating his chances for the next day, and seemed sombre and subdued. On his arrival at home he was met by his friend Tascherau, who said to him, on being told that he intended to speak in the Convention in the morning: "Take care; your enemies have intrigued much and plotted much."

To which Robespierre replied:

"It does not matter; I shall do my duty, nevertheless. I cannot bear this state of things; my heart breaks when I think how the Republic, in the midst of our victories, has never encountered so many dangers. I must either perish, or deliver her from the villains and traitors who mean to ruin her."

LVII

THE MORNING OF JULY 26TH, 1794

(8 Thermidor an II.)

THE whole city knew that Robespierre intended to deliver a speech, and consequently Paris was early astir on the morning of 8 Thermidor ; thousands flocked to the Tuileries, and overflowed the wooden steps at the Pavillon de Marsan, then known as the Pavillon de la Liberté.

The galleries were overcrowded ; the excessive July heat and the oppressive atmosphere of the packed Hall of Assembly were all the more unbearable as the architect who had transformed the Salle des Machines of the Kings into a place of meeting for the Convention had not thought of acoustics, or ventilation.

The halls on the first floor—the chapel, the little *salon*, the Salle de la Liberté—which led to the Convention, were filled with an inquisitive crowd, who asked all kinds of questions of the deputies.

At ten o'clock the sitting began. Robespierre at once ascended the tribune, and, amidst breathless silence, spoke as follows :

" Let others draw you flattering pictures : I intend to tell you useful truths. I shall not justify the

ridiculous terrors which have been perfidiously spread abroad; but I intend to extinguish the torches of discord solely by the power of truth. *I shall reveal the abuses which tend to ruin the country, and which your integrity alone can restrain.* I shall defend before you your outraged authority and violated liberty. *And if I also say something of the persecutions which are directed against me, you will not look on this as a crime; you have nothing in common with the tyrants whom you combat.* The cries of outraged innocence do not trouble your ears, and you know that you are not strangers to the cause of this."

Such was the opening of his speech.[1]

He showed further that the French Revolution was only based on the rights of man and on the fundamental principles of justice. At other revolutions the citizen needed ambition only, but the French Revolution demanded virtue of him. He proceeded to depict the adventures which the French Revolution had passed through, and the conspiracies which had been formed against it. He stated that, during the last few weeks, plots had been devised afresh against the Government by hypocritical schemers, and apparently there were some who wished to avenge the condemnation of Danton, Chabôt, Ronsin, and Hébert; but in that case the whole Convention should be accused, as it was that body which had ordered their execution.

Whose fault was it that so many innocent sufferers

[1] The speech of Robespierre was mutilated by the *Moniteur*, but has been filled in by E. Hamel from the manuscript (*Histoire de Robespierre*. III., p. 721). The words in italics do not appear in the *Moniteur*.

were still languishing in gaol? This was the work of the enemies of liberty. Everywhere the Terreur had been put in force: peaceful citizens had been attacked; prejudices had been construed into crimes; and in the assemblies of the people it was asked that five hundred members of the Convention should be guillotined.

He reminded the meeting that, through his influence, about seventy deputies had been saved who had been too rashly set down as traitors, and that now he was falsely accused of desiring the death of several representatives. He called attention to the fact that at first there had been talk of the dictatorship of the Convention; afterwards it was the dictatorship of the Committee; and now that of a single man.

He complained bitterly of "the monsters" who attempted to steal from him the esteem of the Convention, which he had only obtained by great efforts, and added:

"To appear an object of terror to those whom he reverences and loves, is to a sensitive and upright man the most fearful of tortures; to make him submit to this is the greatest of crimes."

Robespierre continued to show that several Revolutionary families had been driven to despair by many unjust arrests, while members of the Convention had been frightened with visionary lists of suspected deputies. He maintained that he held the National Assembly in the highest respect. For him only two parties existed—the good and bad citizens; patriotism was only based on virtue. Villains, who formed but a small minority, had represented the Convention

as an assembly of dictators, ruling only by la Terreur, and at the same time secretly detested by the French people; they had spoken of "*les hordes conventionelles*," and called the French Revolution "Jacobinism."

He now became personal; and herein lay a great error. Instead of referring to the outrages committed by Fouché in Lyons, by Carrier in Nantes, and Tallien in Bordeaux, he attacked colleagues and co-deputies who were held in the greatest esteem. He disapproved of the fact that the victories had been too much lauded. "Neither by rhetorical phrases nor even by military achievements can we subjugate Europe," he exclaimed, "but by the wisdom of our laws, the majesty of our deliberations, and the greatness of our character."

He accused Carnot—hinting at Hoche—of having acted unjustly towards patriotic generals; he prophesied the rise of militarism, and distinctly predicted what was once to become a fact:

"Were you to slacken the reins of the Revolution for a moment only, you would see them at once seized by a military despotism, and the National Convention disgraced and overthrown by the chief of the factions."

From these words appears the political foresight of Robespierre; and later Cambacérès remarked to Napoleon that his last speech contained "*les plus grandes beautés*," while Charles Nodier called it "*une œuvre monumentale*."

It is clear that his marked antipathy to military rule could not fail to embitter Carnot and other officers

in the Convention and Committees; but still more fatal for the orator was his attack on the controllers of the State finances—Cambon, Ramel, and Mallarmé. Through the policy of these citizens, the poorer classes had been driven to desperation, and the number of malcontents had increased; the rich had been favoured at the expense of the poor; the people had been robbed by the sales of national property in large parcels. Robespierre wished to sell small allotments, which were to be paid for in yearly instalments. He showed how the Commissioners in the Departments had oppressed and plundered the people, and how these outrages had remained unpunished.

And after calling attention to all the injustice which had been committed, he ended his oration by addressing the French people, who were represented by the dense crowds in the galleries:

"*Pēuple*, remember that there exists in your midst a league of rascals, who battle against public virtue, who have more influence than yourselves over your own affairs, who fear you and flatter you all, but persecute you singly in the person of all good citizens."

"Remember that, far from sacrificing this handful of rogues to your happiness, your enemies desire to sacrifice you to this same handful of rogues, who are the authors of all your wrongs, and the only obstacle to public prosperity."

Concluding, he proposed some measures to improve the state of affairs: the punishment of traitors; the purification of the Committee of General Safety, which was to be brought under the authority of the Committee of Public Safety; the reform of this last

Committee: and the whole Government was to be placed under the authority of the Convention.

At the termination of his speech he was loudly applauded from all sides; his enemies trembled, and dared not speak. Rovère whispered to Laurent-Lecointre of Versailles, and asked him to ascend the tribune and read the act of accusation, which had been prepared by the conspirators as far back as May 24th; but the latter replied that this accusation was directed against the entire Committee, and it would therefore hit the others—Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, and Barère. Upon this, Lecointre himself proposed that Robespierre's speech should be printed.[1] Bourdon de l'Oise resisted this motion, and proposed that the two Committees should be instructed to report on the speech. Barère opposed Bourdon:

"The light in a free country must not be hidden under a bushel!"

He voted for the printing of Robespierre's oration. After him, Couthon ascended the tribune, and stated that to hand over the speech to the two Committees would be insulting the Convention, which was quite able to judge of it. He would vote for its publication and distribution in all the towns and villages of the Republic, to show the whole of France that there were men in the Convention who had the courage of their opinions. Hereupon it was decided to distribute the great Jacobin's oration throughout France.

[1] The report of this sitting has been taken by all historians from the *Moniteur* of 9 Thermidor, in which everything was represented as much to Robespierre's disadvantage as possible.

LVIII

JULY 26TH, 1794

(8 THERMIDOR)

IN the Convention it seemed at that moment as if Robespierre could still count on a majority.

But very soon it became apparent that many members of the legislative were, after all, not in favour of the printing and distribution of his speech throughout France. Of the many deputies who ascended the tribune after this decision was arrived at, Vadier was the first to defend the Committee of General Safety, and especially himself as *rapporteur* in the case of Cathérine Théot, which Robespierre had labelled "a ridiculous farce."

He was followed by Cambon, the head of the Administration of Finance, who was much more violent.

Robespierre had imprudently denounced the chiefs of this Department, and his action was to have disastrous results.

Cambon, trembling with indignation, exclaimed: "Before I am disgraced I will address myself to France," and defended his financial measures emphatically, also the last decree, which taxed the smaller *rentiers*. This had been strongly condemned by Robespierre, whom he now reproached with frustrating

the will and aims of the National Convention by his personal influence.

Robespierre rose and maintained that this charge was as incomprehensible as it was foolish. How could he possibly frustrate the wishes of the Convention, especially in financial matters with which he had never interfered? "By general reflexions on principles I have been enabled to perceive that the ideas of Cambon on finance are not as favourable to the success of the Revolution as he believes."

But the Convention had a great respect for its financial expert, and the applause which had greeted his words showed Robespierre how ill-judged his attack had been. Cambon had won a great reputation by his reports on financial problems. His Ledger of the National Debt—his own particular idea—had gained him the esteem of many members.

Billaud-Varenne—one of the conspirators—ascended the tribune, and condemned the resolution to distribute Robespierre's speech, as it accused the two Committees. It should first be carefully examined.

"I have not directed my attack against the entire Committee," exclaimed Robespierre. "I ask leave to explain my ideas further."

But many members interrupted, "We all ask that permission," and the courage of Billaud-Varenne revived, as he once more rose to utter some hasty, passionate, and disconnected phrases; but in conclusion made use of some dramatic expressions, very happily chosen to make an impression on the excited and agitated assembly.

"Robespierre is right," he cried; "the masks must

be torn off, never mind what faces they cover. If it is true that we do not enjoy liberty of opinion, I prefer that my corpse should serve as a throne for an ambitious man, rather than to make myself the accomplice of his crimes by my silence." And lastly, he proposed to reconsider the former decision of the Convention, and to send Robespierre's speech to the Committees.

Various members spoke after him. A timid representative—Panis—who had been made to believe that his name figured on the notorious lists, asked if it were true that Fouché and himself were condemned to die. Robespierre replied scornfully that he could not confirm the truth of what had never existed. "I have flattered no one. I fear no one. I have slandered no one."

When Panis hereupon asked whether Fouché's name was on the list he answered even more scornfully, and concluded proudly: "I have done my duty; it is for others to do theirs."

But he had not fully done so. In his exaggerated idealism he had assailed Cambon, whilst remaining silent about others, who should have been punished long before: Carrier, Tallien, Fouché, Dubois-Crancé, Rovère, and Bourdon de l'Oise.

Many members of the Convention, whose evil consciences cried aloud, thought that they were threatened, and joined Robespierre's enemies.

He was to pay dearly for his lack of commonsense, for his fanatical adherence to what he called the principles of the Revolutionary policy. He regarded the Revolution as a religion, and thought

that it was the foremost duty of a citizen to be virtuous. No doubt he fulfilled this obligation himself; but he failed to see that opponents with less moral inclinations would take away the ground from underneath his feet by clever diplomacy. He looked on the death-sentences for traitors and scoundrels as a means of saving the Revolution, and considered the execution of the Hébertists and Dantonists a just punishment for their private immorality, coupled with their suspicious conduct as politicians.

It is remarkable that on 8 Thermidor nobody in the Convention called attention to the fact that the motion for the printing and distribution of Robespierre's oration had been passed, and that it was entirely out of order to refer back to a decree, when it had once been accepted.

The example of Billaud-Varenne was followed by Bentabole and Charlier, two friends of Marat. It was useless for Robespierre to exclaim:

"What! I have had the courage to proclaim in the midst of the Convention truths which I consider necessary for the safety of the country, and you want to have my discourse examined by the members whom I accuse!"

Amar and Thirion made the same request, and at last the Assembly decided by a majority of votes to annul the decree, and to send the speech to the two Committees to be reported on. There is no doubt that the attitude of Cambon greatly influenced the political defeat of Robespierre, for many members of the centre—La Plaine—were moved to turn their backs on the latter, and support the former. It is stated

that Cambon much regretted this triumph; he disappeared from the scenes during the empire, was banished from France by Louis XVIII., and remarked at that period: "We killed the Republic on 9 Thermidor, believing that we were only killing Robespierre. Unconsciously I served the passions of some villains. Had I but perished that day with them, liberty would still be alive." [1]

An improbable tradition exists, that after leaving the Convention at five o'clock in the evening, Robespierre walked with Eléonore Duplay and his dog to the Champs Elysées, and that he remarked to her, as he pointed to the red glow of the setting sun: "Ah, c'est du beau temps pour demain."

Alphonse Esquiros has related this incident in his *Histoire des Montagnards*, but it hardly seems worthy of belief, as Robespierre could not have had so much leisure, and must have been too seriously inclined after the events of the day. But it is fairly certain that he was calm and composed at the evening meal of the Duplays, and said simply: "The majority in the Assembly will hear me."

Afterwards he went to the Jacobin Club. After all that had occurred, there was naturally a very turbulent meeting. A large number of members had already arrived, who greeted Robespierre with enthusiastic applause, many hastening to shake hands with him. Amongst those present were Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois, who had not shown themselves for a long time. The report on this sitting was never published, but some details have been made

[1] E. Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III., p. 739.

known through a pamphlet of Billaud-Varenne after 9 Thermidor, when he replied to the charges of Lecointre (*Réponse de J. N. Billaud à Laurent-Lecointre*). From these it appears that at the commencement of the sitting, Robespierre, Collot d'Herbois, and Billaud-Varenne, all asked leave to speak at the same time. The Assembly wished to hear Robespierre first, who read his oration of that morning amidst breathless silence. It is certain that he concluded his speech with the words: "If I must succumb, well then, my friends, you will see me drink the hemlock (*la ciguë*) calmly," upon which the painter David exclaimed: "If you drink the hemlock, I will drink it with you." David was a man of words, rather than actions. He did not appear in the Convention the next day, and thus missed the opportunity of keeping his word.

LIX

THE EVENING AND NIGHT OF JULY 26TH, 1794

(8 Thermidor)

THE Jacobins applauded the painter David when he maintained that he was prepared to die for Robespierre. Later David always professed the greatest admiration for him, and said to his sons :

"You will be told that Robespierre was a villain ; he will be painted to you in the most hideous colours ; do not believe a word of it. The day will come when history will render him the fullest justice ! "

Dumas, the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal, was also chairman of the Jacobins at the evening sitting of July 26th. After Robespierre's speech he declared that a conspiracy had been organised in Government circles, and, looking straight at Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois, he exclaimed, in a menacing tone:

"It seems strange that men who have kept silence for months are in such haste to-day to make themselves heard, no doubt to disclaim the crushing truths which have been heard from Robespierre. It is easy to recognise in them the successors of Danton and Hébert, and I predict that they will likewise share the fate of those conspirators."

Collot d'Herbois ascended the tribune, but was

received with jeers and hooting. He reminded his hearers that an attempt had been made on his life, but they laughed at him. Billaud-Varenne exclaimed fiercely that there were no more Jacobins now patriots were insulted, and it was time for him to cover his head with his mantle and receive the death-thrust. A great din and shouting prevented him from proceeding, and he left the tribune. Shortly afterwards he and his friend quitted the club, amidst the execrations of the Jacobins.

When Couthon rose to speak he was listened to with rapt attention. He proposed to open the discussion on the most disgraceful plot that had ever been hatched, adding: "The conspirators will turn pale before the people; they will be confounded; they will perish."

The majority rose from their seats and waved their hats, shouting: "To the guillotine with the conspirators;" and those who did not join in their manifestations were at once ejected from the Assembly.

Dumas, Coffinhal, Payan, and Prosper Sijas—all staunch supporters of Robespierre—proposed to him to hurry to the Tuileries, pounce down upon the two Committees, and have the members arrested; but he was horrified at all lawless proceedings; his conscience forbade him to accept such a proposal; he would be satisfied with the support of the brethren. Although the meeting was a satisfactory one to him, no decision was arrived at. The Jacobins went to their homes, amidst cries of "*Vive la République—Périssent les traitres!*" and, overcome by many emotions, their leader returned to the Duplays.

During the night his enemies did their best to win over the Right in the Convention, where everything would depend on the attitude assumed by this party. Tallien, Fouché, Rovère, and Bourdon de l'Oise, paid visits to Boissy-d'Anglas, Durand de Maillane, and Palasne de Campeaux—strong opponents of the Terreur—and proposed to form a league against Robespierre, who, according to them, was the sole cause of the numerous executions; and this was to end the Reign of Terror.

At first the men of the Right would not hear of it; but Tallien and his party persevered, and at their third visit they succeeded in persuading the leaders to make common cause with them.[1] The arrangement was no honour to the Right, who only fell in with the political reprobates, whom they themselves detested, on condition that the Reign of Terror would thus be brought to a conclusion. And this proposal of putting an end to the Terreur was made by the very men whose hands were soiled with the blood of their victims in Bordeaux and Lyons; the same who had repeatedly but vainly demanded the arrest of the members of the Right as disguised royalists.

The Right knew that if Robespierre were victorious, the Reign of the Terror would decline, as was evident from his speech of the previous morning; but also, that his defeat would result in the disappearance of the Terreur. In that case, the foundation of the Republic would be undermined, which would open a door for a Restoration; and this decided the wavering party. If the enemies of Robespierre perceived the danger to the

[1] *Mémoires de Durand de Maillane*, ch. x., p. 189.

Republic, they no doubt dismissed it at once with the consoling reflexion : "*Après nous le déluge.*" Their principal object was to bring down the stern Robespierre, the enemy of all meanness and villainy ; it was the one ideal of this band of miscreants, who were willing to sacrifice the Republic, if they could only get rid of him.

The extreme Left was likewise assailed ; but other arguments were necessary here. Robespierre was accused of moderation and tolerance towards aristocrats ; for had he not saved the lives of a large number of friends of the Girondins ? And here also the plotters received promises of support.

Several incidents on the evening and night of 8 Thermidor predicted the coming storm, even in one of the theatres—le Théâtre de la République—where Talma, who was still a very rabid Sansculotte, was acting in *Epicharis et Néron*, a drama by Legouvé. Thundering applause greeted the verses :

"Quelle indigne terreur de votre âme s'empare ?
Et pourquoi voulez-vous, Romains, qu'on se sépare ?
Voilà donc les grands cœurs qui devraient tout souffrir !
Ils osent conspirer et craignent de mourir ! "[1]

Neither Robespierre nor Couthon were present in the Committee of Public Safety at the Tuileries ; Carnot, Robert Lindet, Prieur de la Côte d'Or, Barère, and Saint-Just only were in their places, and quietly continued their work.

Saint-Just was composed and easy, glancing now and then inquiringly at his colleagues. He had just

[1] *Souvenirs d'une actrice, par Madame* Louise Fusil, Vol. II., p. 48. Quoted by Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution*, Vol. XI., p. 212.

handed the first eighteen pages of his speech for the next morning to a copyist when Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois entered with some members of the Committee of General Safety. Collot looked very pale ; his eyes flashed ominously, and when Saint-Just asked him what news he brought from the Jacobin meeting, he broke out into violent abuse :

" Coward ! hypocrite ! You are three scoundrels, who want to lead us on to the destruction of the country ; but freedom will outlive your odious machinations."

Elie Lacoste, of the Committee of General Safety, shouted that Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just were forming a triumvirate, with the object of ruining the country. Barère added that the triumvirate was composed of a villain (Robespierre), a cripple (Couthon), and a child (Saint-Just), and that they purposed to divide their native land amongst them.

Saint-Just crossed his arms and remained in his seat without showing a trace of fear or agitation. Collot d'Herbois shook his fist, and exclaimed : " I am certain that these papers in your pocket contain nothing but libels against us ; " upon which he rose, and threw all the papers from his pockets on to the large table ; but no one took the trouble to read them. He quietly continued working at his speech, which he promised to read in the Committee the next morning before attending the Convention, and assured Collot d'Herbois that he should bring a charge against him of slandering Robespierre in public.

Lecointre, a deputy, attempted to gain admittance, but was refused, and consoled himself with declaring

to a member of the Committee of General Safety that Hanriot, the general of the National Guards, and Fleuriot-Lescot, the Mayor of Paris, ought to be arrested. The Committee sent for both these men during the night, to ask for information on some points. When Saint-Just had finished his work he calmly joined in the discussions, and expressed his surprise that every one was busied with threatening dangers of which he himself knew nothing. He complained of the general desire—*d'improviser la foudre à chaque instant*, as Robespierre had called it—and thought that they ought to return to more reasonable and practical ideas.

He received no reply ; the company remained silent, and their attitude boded no good. But Saint-Just still relied fully on himself and the Convention. At five o'clock in the morning he left the Hall of the Committee.

LX

ROBESPIERRE, ACCORDING TO BARRAS

ON July 27th Robespierre was to speak for the last time in the Convention. After consulting the various sources of evidence which were obtainable, we have tried to give a fair historical portrait of the great "incorruptible"; but a little while ago a witness appeared in this historical trial who must have an impartial hearing. On 9 Thermidor the ex-Vicomte de Barras played an important *rôle*, as he defeated the armed opposition of the Commune with the armed opposition of the Convention.

Some time ago a work appeared entitled, *Mémoires de Barras, membre du Directoire*.[1] These Memoirs were written by Barras himself, as is quite evident from the preface of George Duruy. The owners of the manuscript hesitated to publish it, as this voluminous work spoke contemptuously of Napoleon I. George Duruy inherited the writings of Barras, through his marriage with a lady belonging to the Saint-Albin family, and at last decided to publish them. The attack of Barras on Napoleon need not detain us here, but we must not omit to notice all that he says in reference to Robespierre, and his fall on 9 Thermidor.

[1] Paris: Hachette, 1895: 2 vols.

In the first place, he relates how he was introduced to Robespierre by Fréron—a former journalist who could only rise to his accustomed violence in words and actions by the assistance of alcohol. There is an element of historical truth in all the narrations of Barras, but inaccuracies in details frequently occur. He begins, for example, by asserting that the house of Duplay, in the rue Saint-Honoré, has disappeared, as the rue Duphot was afterwards constructed on that site. This is incorrect ; the house where the Duplays lived still exists, and is now number 398. New storeys have been added, and this has given rise to a warm discussion between Victorien Sardou and G. Lenotre, two friends, who each wrote a pamphlet in defence of his opinion about the alterations in the Duplay residence. Barras has given a description of Robespierre's study, which is possibly accurate, but may have been purposely exaggerated ; he also maintains that Robespierre was annoyed with Fréron for addressing him in the second person singular. This must be incorrect, as the word *vous* had as good as disappeared from the daily speech of the Jacobins. The same may be said of his comparison between Robespierre and Talleyrand. The latter was an unprincipled diplomatist, destitute of moral ideals, who was only actuated by ambition. Robespierre was a fanatic, with the greatest zeal for virtue and morality, but he was wanting in the tact to utilise men and circumstances for the fulfilment of his plans. Barras has not concealed his detestation and hatred for him, and owns that he plotted against Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon. He and his party first intended to risk an attack against the

entire Committee, but afterwards they selected the three friends.

He seems to have been annoyed with Maximilien, because the latter—a mere citizen—had not betrayed the slightest interest in his visit, when Fréron had introduced him—a *ci-devant* Vicomte. Barras goes on to relate some scenes at the sittings of the Committee, which sound very suspicious. On one occasion, just before the important events of July 27th, he was looking through the open doors of the Committee, when he saw Collot d'Herbois angrily holding Robespierre by his coat-tails to prevent his leaving the hall, and heard him exclaim loudly:

"Robespierre is a wretch, a hypocrite! He wants to impute to us what he alone is capable of. We esteem all our colleagues; we love all patriots; it is this man who wants to murder them all." Hereupon Barras hastened to deliver Robespierre from the furious Collot.

There is no doubt that during the last days of July, the triumvirate Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just were clearly opposed to Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, Barère, Carnot, Prieur de la Côte d'Or, and Lindet; but the tale of Barras is conspicuous for improbabilities. The members of the Convention had no right to enter the Hall of the Committee, and scuffles such as the above could hardly have taken place. Barras was not the man to appreciate Robespierre, whose cool and austere attitude contrasted sharply with the boisterous and savage manner which was habitual to the ex-viscount. Robespierre adhered to the strictest rules of honour and respectability.

Barras was, to a high degree, what was called during the Second Empire "*un viveur*," and consequently a strong antipathy between these two men was inevitable. Barras calls the oration in the Convention on 8 Thermidor a discourse "as long as it was vague, mysterious, and menacing," and in this way he continues to pronounce on the events of 9 Thermidor. Before enlarging further on his views, we must explain here what actually took place.

9 Thermidor was a day of oppressive heat; dark clouds overspread the sky, and thunder was in the air. At ten o'clock the two Committees assembled, comprising almost all the personal enemies of Robespierre, except David, who was by no means anxious to appear, and Philippe Le Bas, who bravely remained true to his friends.

When Couthon arrived, he inquired into the nature of the discussions, and was informed that the meeting was deliberating on the advisability of arresting Hanriot, the supreme commander of the National Guards, upon which he indignantly exclaimed: "That is the Counter-Revolution; you will produce a terrible upheaval in Paris." But every voice was raised against him; Carnot especially attacked him fiercely, and Couthon replied:

"I well knew that you were the most wicked of men."

"And you the most treacherous," retorted Carnot.

Precisely at twelve o'clock an usher of the Convention entered to announce that Saint-Just had ascended the tribune, and delivered his letter to the Committee, beginning with the words:

"Injustice has withered my heart (*flétri mon cœur*). I will open it to the National Convention."

Hereupon Couthon is supposed to have torn the letter to pieces, while Philippe Rhul, of the Committee of General Safety, exclaimed :

"Let us unmask these villains, or offer our heads to the Convention."

These details are taken from the defence written by Barère and Billaud-Varenne after 9 Thermidor, under the title of "*Réponse des membres des anciens Comités aux inculpations renouvelées par Laurent Lecointre.*" It is presumable that everything here was represented in the most partial light. At twelve o'clock nearly all the deputies who were in Paris hastened to the Convention. In the ante-room—Salle de la Liberté—Bourdon de l'Oise met Durand de Maillane, the pillar of the Right, who was walking with Rovère, and exclaimed :

"What brave men are those of the Right!"

At that moment Tallien suddenly joined this group.

"There is Saint-Just at the tribune," he said; "we must make an end of it (*il faut en finir*)."

It was disastrous for Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon, that so many of their staunchest friends and supporters had been sent to the various armies or had replaced bloodthirsty pro-consuls such as Carrier, Fouché, Rovère, and others. About fifty zealous Jacobins, allies of Robespierre, and faithful friends to the Republic, were absent; among them were Laporte and Reverchon at Lyons; Albitte and Salicetti at Nice; Duquesnoy at Atrecht; Maignet at Marseilles; Jean-Bon-Saint-André with Prieur de la Marne in the

western seaports. Had they been in Paris, matters would not have gone so far on that fatal day.

When Robespierre left his home in the morning, never again to return, Maurice Duplay warned him to take precautions against the dangers which threatened him in the Assembly; but he shook his head and replied:

"The majority in the Convention is just. Compose yourself; I have nothing to fear."

And thus the noble and virtuous fanatic went his way for the last time to the Convention, still believing that he stood too high for treason and violence.

LXI

IN THE CONVENTION ON JULY 27TH, 1794

(9 THERMIDOR)

COLLOT D'HERBOIS, the Nero of Lyons, was president at the morning sitting of the Convention on July 27th. All historians—Thiers, Michelet, Louis Blanc Dauban, Elie Sorin, Ernest Hamel, Charles d'Héricault—have been obliged to relate the events of 9 Thermidor according to the reports of Robespierre's enemies in the *Moniteur*, and the exact historical truth of what happened on the morning of that date will doubtless never be known.

Some words and incidents, however, are corroborated alike by friend and foe. The sitting began with the reading of the documents which had been received. Saint-Just stationed himself at the foot of the tribune, and, when the reading was over, opened his speech with the words: "I belong to no faction. I will fight them all."

It had been arranged that neither Saint-Just nor Robespierre should be allowed to speak, for the enemy feared that the Convention might succumb to the influence of their eloquence. It was necessary to use violence—and Saint-Just, who had made his name immortal by the victory of Fleurus, was to be interrupted by the insolence of one of the deputies, the audacious Tallien. Saint-Just was very slender, small,

and fair; his opponents called him "*un enfant*," but he was distinguished for his unbounded strength of will, and was confident that no one would dare to interrupt him. As usual, he was elegantly dressed in a light yellow coat, a white scarf, a white waistcoat, and light grey trousers. The speech which he intended to deliver was afterwards printed.[1]

He complained in it of the disaffection which had arisen amongst the members of the Committee of Public Safety; and the cause of this discord was the jealousy roused by the great moral influence of one of its members. Robespierre was pronounced a tyrant, because he knew how to win the hearts of the people by his eloquence. "Could there be a more disinterested triumph?" asked Saint-Just. "Cato would have expelled from Rome the bad citizen who had called eloquence at the rostrum the tyranny of opinion!"

Furthermore, he proved that Robespierre was not aiming at the dictatorship, but, on the contrary, some members of the Committee had already begun to seize all the power of government. In conclusion he wrote: "There has therefore existed a plan to usurp the power, by sacrificing some of the members of the Committee, and scattering the others throughout the country, while destroying the Revolutionary Tribunal and depriving Paris of its magistrates. Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois are the authors of that plot."

Only the first four sentences of his speech were read

[1] *Discours commencé par Saint-Just en la seance du 9 Thermidor, dont le dépôt sur le bureau a été décrété par la Convention nationale et dont elle a ordonné l'impression par décret du 30 du même mois.*

by Saint-Just, for suddenly Tallien ascended the steps of the tribune and cried :

"I demand leave to speak on a point of order. The former speaker has said that he belonged to no faction. Neither do I. No good citizen can look upon the unhappy position of his country without tears. Everywhere discord is prevalent. Yesterday a member of the Government spoke on his own behalf. To-day another one is about to do the same. I demand that at last everything be made clear. . . ."

Applause was already heard. Saint-Just was so indignant at this unexpected interruption that he gave way and remained silent.

Billaud took possession of the tribune. Barère had just whispered to him : "Only attack Robespierre : leave Saint-Just and Couthon alone ; " the partial Courtois is responsible for these words, which he professes to have heard from citizen Espert, another deputy, who represented l'Ariège.

Billaud-Varenne began his speech by declaring that the Jacobins, at their meeting of the previous evening, had threatened to murder the members of the Convention. This was a pure fabrication, but served to frighten the Assembly. He pointed at a member of the Mountain who had distinguished himself by his virulence on the same occasion. Cries of " Arrest him ! " were at once raised, and the unfortunate deputy, whose name is not mentioned in the *Moniteur*, was ejected amidst loud applause.

Billaud-Varenne came forward with all kinds of absurd accusations ; he reproached Saint-Just for having failed to read his speech in the Committee as he had promised, and charged Robespierre with having opposed

the arrest of a secretary of the Committee, who was accused of having stolen 114,000 livres; protected Hanriot, while he knew that the latter belonged to Hébert's club, and given an appointment to a *ci-devant*, general la Valette.

Continuing, he declared that according to Robespierre, the Convention did not contain twenty members who were worthy of being nominated as deputies in the field. Lastly, he charged him with having pushed the law of June 10th through the Convention, without the approval of the members of the Committee. "We will all die with honour. I do not think that there is a single representative here who would wish to live under a tyrant."

Here the speaker was interrupted with cries of "Non! non! Périssent les tyrans!"

At the conclusion of his speech, Billaud-Varenne charged him with having opposed the arrest of Danton. Robespierre at once hurried to the tribune, but the conspirators shouted in chorus: "Down with the tyrant! down with him!" and prevented him from speaking.

Tallien, however, was listened to; he produced a dagger—the poignard of Thérézia Cabarrus—and declared:

"I have armed myself with a dagger, which I will plunge into the breast of the new Cromwell, if the Convention has not the courage to decree his accusation." The Assembly applauded. On the proposal of Tallien, it was decided to arrest Hanriot and his staff, and the Convention declared its sittings permanent until the power of the law had established the Revolu-

tion. Billaud-Varenne demanded the arrest of citizen Boulanger, who had called Collot d'Herbois a traitor in the Jacobin Club on the previous evening; also of general la Valette, a *protégé* of Robespierre. The latter, who did his best to make himself heard, was greeted with savage yells of "*A bas le tyran!*" Barère followed with a moderate speech; he proposed to examine carefully Robespierre's charges against the Committees, and likewise refrain from nominating another general of the National Guards. In a long harangue by the grey-haired Vadier, who was the next speaker, Robespierre was reproached with having defended such rogues as Chabôt, Bazire, Camille Desmoulins, and Danton, and charged with saving the life of the dangerous fanatic, Catherine Théot.

But Tallien, who was afraid that the zeal of the Convention was on the decline, again ascended the tribune, "to keep the discussion to the point"; upon which Robespierre exclaimed: "I am quite capable of doing that." But his voice was drowned by his opponents. Tallien accused him of having caused the arrest of the Revolutionary Committee of the Section de l'Indivisibilité—a matter of which we have already treated.

Robespierre's voice was again heard: "It is false! I . . ."— and once more he was silenced by the bellowing of his enemies. Calm and unmoved, he stood and faced the Assembly, holding a small pen-knife in his hand; he looked at his partisans the Montagnards, but no assistance was to be found anywhere. Once more he attempted to obtain a hearing: "It is to you, *hommes purs*, that I address

myself, and not to the brigands." But it was useless; the uproar was deafening.

He was now beside himself with rage, and shouted: "President of murderers, for the last time I ask your leave to speak." But Thuriot, who had replaced Collot d'Herbois as president, calmly replied: "You will speak when it is your turn."

Had there been one honest man in the Assembly at that moment to point out how the Convention dishonoured itself by trampling on justice and consenting to the most unheard-of tyranny, then the national representation might have been quieted and protected by Robespierre against the most shameless atrocities.

But every one remained silent.

LXII

JULY 27TH, 1794

(9 THERMIDOR)

THE disorderly tumult in the Assembly went from bad to worse; the conspirators could find no better means of drowning Robespierre's words and carrying the wavering members with them. Thuriot in vain attempted to restore order by vigorously ringing his bell, and thus contributed not a little to the general uproar.

Robespierre was using all his efforts to make himself heard, when the voice of Garnier de l'Aube—an unknown member of the Mountain—was heard, shouting:

"The blood of Danton chokes you."

Robespierre's reply was distinctly audible.

"It is Danton, then, whom you wish to avenge! Cowards! why did you not defend him?"

Garnier came from the same place as Danton: he had remained silent when the lion was accused in the Convention on 11 Germinal, and the epithet "coward" was therefore richly deserved.

In the midst of this indescribable confusion, a voice was heard to exclaim:

"I demand the decree of arrest against Robespierre!"

It was Louchet, the Mountaineer, a staunch supporter of the Terreur, which he thought to promote

by attacking Robespierre. It seemed as though the Assembly were impressed by the motion—there were few signs of approval. Louchet at once shouted :

"Vote, vote! My motion is supported." Another Montagnard, Lozeau, representing the Charente-Inférieure, proposed to draw up an Act of Accusation against Robespierre, because he had been a "*dominateur*"; and louder and louder rose the cries of "Vote!"

At last Augustin Robespierre asked leave to speak, and the Assembly quieted down. Augustin had shown great personal courage at Toulon, which had considerably influenced its capture. He had likewise ruled wisely in the Departments de la Haute-Saône and du Doubs, and delivered these from the tyranny of the Hébertists : the young deputy was held in great esteem.

Defiantly regarding the Convention, he exclaimed :

"I am as much in fault as my brother! I share his virtue ; I will also share his fate. I demand the decree of accusation against myself also."

The Assembly was moved at this : many members hesitated, but the majority applauded. Maximilien Robespierre made desperate attempts to defend his brother, but in vain ; he could not make himself heard above the shrill and discordant voices of his enemies. An exclamation of Fréron, who could only speak under the influence of alcohol, is recorded :

"Ah, qu'un tyran est dur à abattre."

Lozeau wished that the arrest of the two brothers should be put to the vote. The chairman consented, and the majority voted in favour of the proposal, with

cries of "Vive la liberté! Vive la République!" to which Robespierre replied:

"The Republic is lost, for brigands are triumphant."

Lozeau now demanded the arrest of Couthon and Saint-Just, and both of them recommended the suggestion; but Philippe le Bas, a young deputy and bosom friend of Saint-Just, rushed to the tribune. His comrades tried to restrain him, but he broke from them, exclaiming loudly:

"I will not share the disgrace of that decree. I also ask to be arrested."

Once more the Assembly hesitated; Le Bas was one of the most deserving members, who had rendered incalculable services as commissioner on the Rhine and in Belgium. And by this sacrifice, the happy husband of Elisabeth Duplay,—who had lately presented him with a son and heir—demonstrated his extreme indignation at the cowardly attack on Robespierre and his friends. Fréron made himself heard, declaring that Robespierre, with Saint-Just and Couthon, had formed a triumvirate, and that Couthon intended to ascend the throne over the bodies of six members of the Convention. The paralysed Couthon smiled bitterly, and pointed to his useless limbs:

"I wished to ascend the throne? I?"

Saint-Just leaned against the speakers' tribune, and looked on contemptuously at the disgraceful scene. He was ordered to place the manuscript of his unspoken oration on the table, which he did with supreme indifference. Collot d'Herbois still referred to Robespierre's plan of surrounding the Convention with National Guards, to which the latter loudly replied:

"That is a miserable lie."

The president ordered Robespierre and Saint-Just to be arrested, but the ushers dared not lay hands on them; upon which, the majority demanded that they should place themselves at the bar; gendarmes appeared, and the five friends were taken into custody. It was now half-past four, and the sitting adjourned until seven.

From all that happened in the Assembly on 9 Thermidor, it plainly appears that no one charged Robespierre and his friends with having been the cause of the Terreur. On the contrary, he was accused of having assisted nobles, arrested one of the Revolutionary Committees, and defended Danton and Camille Desmoulins.

It was during the Empire and the Restoration that the legend first took shape in which Robespierre is represented as a bloodthirsty tyrant who sent thousands to the guillotine—an awful being, with the cunning of a serpent and the ferocity of a tiger; and the ill-informed Carlyle speaks of the "paralytic Couthon and seagreen Robespierre."

It was left to the two Committees to execute the decrees of the Convention; the Committee of Public Safety now consisted of six members only; Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, Carnot, Barère, Robert Lindet, and Prieur de la Côte d'Or; for Jean-Bon-Saint-André and Prieur de la Marne were absent. The Committee of General Safety was composed mainly of Robespierre's enemies, for Le Bas had been arrested and David was keeping in the background. Robespierre had attempted, by the institution of a Bureau de Police

générale, as a subdivision of his Committee, to check the extreme measures of the Committee of General Safety, and for that reason his bitterest enemies were found in the latter. At five o'clock little was known in Paris of what had happened in the legislative. Fouquier-Tinville stated later that he only heard of it at dinner-time, and at once proceeded to the Palace of Justice to await the orders of the Committees, who relied on Fleuriot-Lescot and the Commune; but the mayor was a faithful adherent of Robespierre, and called an extraordinary meeting of the Municipal Council at five o'clock, on account of the proceedings in the Convention.

Ninety-one members were present when the mayor opened the meeting.

"Citizens," he said, "it is here that the country was saved on August 10th and May 31st, and here she will once more be rescued. Let all, therefore, unite with the Commune; let admittance to its meetings be free to every one without the exhibition of a ticket; and let all members take the oath to die at their posts."

Every one rose and took the oath which was to cost them their lives. Citizen Payan, who filled the post of *agent national* to the Commune, represented the state of affairs in the Convention. He called the five arrested members the true friends of the people, and their enemies the men who only desired to advance their own interests by the Revolution.

And therefore the members of the council agreed to the proposal of the mayor: firstly, to appeal to the people; secondly, to arrest Collot d'Herbois,

Amar, Léonard Bourdon, Fréron, Tallien, Panis, Carnot, Dubois-Crancé, Vadier, Fouché, Granet, and Moyse Bayle. This batch included the principal conspirators, especially members of the Committee of General Safety; but Billaud-Varenne, Barère, Barras, Carrier, and Bourdon de l'Oise, were not mentioned.

Further, it was decided to close the barrières, sound the tocsins, beat the drums in every section, and ignore the orders of the two Committees; to summon the commanders of the armed forces to the town-hall, to take the oath of allegiance to the people; to place the cannon from the Section des Droits de l'Homme—which was in close vicinity to the Town-Hall—in the Place de Grève; to instruct all the Sections to assemble and deliberate on the dangers of the country; to order the commander of the National Guards to lead the people against the conspirators; and finally it was resolved that Commissioners of the Municipal Council should accompany the military, and help to deliver Robespierre and his friends from prison.

And thus the last decisive struggle was prepared. The city of Paris was to oppose some rebellious ring-leaders of the Convention; a civil war was to decide. It seemed as if the Commune were able to collect the larger force. Possibly Robespierre might return to the Convention as victor, and it would appear how greatly he and his friends were respected by the populace.

LXIII

THE EVENING OF JULY 27TH, 1794

(9 THERMIDOR)

THE Municipal Council of Paris, in entire agreement with its excellent Mayor, decided to issue the following proclamation throughout Paris:

"Citizens, the country is in greater danger than ever. Robespierre is proscribed, who has established the consoling belief in the Supreme Being, and the Immortality of the Soul; Saint-Just, that apostle of virtue, who put an end to the treachery on the Rhine and in the North—who, like Le Bas, caused the victories of the Republican armies; Couthon, that virtuous citizen, whose head and heart only are alive, but who burns with ardour and patriotism; young Robespierre, who presided at the victories of the Italian army."

Furthermore, the proclamation described as traitors: Amar, a *ci-devant* with an income of thirty thousand livres; the former Viscount de Barras, and "other monsters of the same sort": Collot d'Herbois, who, as an actor, robbed the cash-box of his Company; Bourdon de l'Oise, the indefatigable slanderer; and Barère, who belonged to all parties.

Against the violence of the Convention, therefore, the Commune placed the revolt of the people; they relied in particular on the National Guards under Hanriot.

As this general belonged to the friends of Robespierre, all kinds of absurd stories have again and again been related about him. Michelet called him a drunkard and a braggart, and charged him with a misdeed which even royalist historians dared not confirm. On 9 Thermidor the tumbrils, containing numerous victims, proceeded through the densely populated rue Saint-Antoine, as the guillotine had been removed to the barrière du Trone, at the extreme eastern part of the town. It is said that some of the onlookers could not repress their compassion for the hapless victims, and Hanriot and some of his officers charged into the midst of the crowd, dispersing them with their swords.

In *La Révolution de Thermidor*, the work of the anti-Revolutionist, Charles d'Héricault, this statement of Michelet is much questioned. It seems absurd to suppose that a commander of the National Guards, with his aide-de-camps, would ride behind a tumbril to preserve the peace. Hamel is the only historian who shows some sympathy for Hanriot. Possibly the General was not conspicuous for great ability, but he was certainly a sincere and faithful supporter of Robespierre's policy.

As soon as he heard of the arrest of the five friends he at once mounted his horse and appealed to the patriotism of the gunners who occupied the Place de Grève, facing the town-hall; he then stationed the entire corps of gendarmes near the municipal building, sounded the drums, and closed the barrières.

Robespierre and his friends had been conducted at

half-past four from the Convention to the Pavillon de la Liberté, where the Committee of General Safety held its sittings. Hanriot rushed with a small escort to the Tuileries, left his gendarmes outside, and, accompanied by his officers, entered the hall where Robespierre and his friends were confined. Robespierre asked him not to use violence, as he would defend himself before the Tribunal.[1] Hanriot wished to remove him, but the gendarmes of the Committee of General Safety interfered, arrested him, and bound his hands with stout ropes. Hereupon Robespierre and his friends were taken to another hall, where a dinner was prepared for them.

When the repast was over they were conducted to their respective prisons. Augustin Robespierre was consigned to La Force, after Saint-Lazare had declined to receive him. Likewise Le Bas, who had been refused at the Conciergerie. Couthon was escorted to La Bourbe, and Saint-Just to les Ecossais.

Maximilien Robespierre had been conducted to le Luxembourg, but the governor would not admit him, and towards seven o'clock he was taken to the mayoralty at the Quai des Orfèvres, where he was received with cheers. A deputation from the Commune soon appeared, inviting him to proceed to the Hôtel-de-Ville ; but he refused, maintaining that he preferred to appear before his judges—and indeed, if Robespierre had been tried before the Tribunal, there would have been every chance of his acquittal. However, a second deputation prevailed on him to accompany them ; and

[1] Confirmed by Léonard Gallois, *Histoire de la Convention*, vii., p. 268, and contradicted by Ch. d'Héricault.

thus, since he had thrown in his lot with the Commune, his fate depended on its victory or defeat.

Everything was done by both sides to continue the struggle. The two Committees issued orders to counteract the measures of the rebellious municipality. The closing of the barrières was prohibited ; all those who had sounded the tocsin or joined in the drum-beating were to be arrested, and the officers of the National Guards were forbidden to execute the orders of Hanriot ; Fleuriot-Lescot, and all those of his officials who had taken part in the opposition, were to be arrested.

The Sections des Arcis and de l'Indivisibilité, which bordered the Place de Grève, were exhorted to prevent the street crowds and proclaim that the arrested deputies were "the cruellest enemies of Liberty and Equality."

Furthermore, the three sections, de Guillaume Tell, des Gardes Françaises and de la Montagne—near the Louvre and Palais Royal, consisting chiefly of moderate and well-to-do merchants, and manufacturers—were called out, with their companies, to defend the Convention. The Section de la Montagne was composed of shopkeepers from the rue Saint-Honoré, rue Richelieu, and rue Neuve des Petits Champs, who were almost reactionary, and had always distinguished themselves through their lack of admiration for the Jacobins. Carnot took care to collect the soldiers of the garrison of Paris round the Tuileries.

The revolt of the Commune on behalf of Robespierre and his friends was meanwhile vigorously supported by the Jacobins, who had called an extraordinary

meeting; but no sooner were they assembled than they received the command to deliver up Robespierre's speech of the previous evening, which they had decided to print. The Jacobins refused to comply with this order, maintaining that they had no authority to do so, and hereupon agreed to all that had been done by the Commune, approving of its measures, and sending a deputation to the Hôtel-de-Ville, entreating them to persevere and to die, rather than be ruled by intriguers. The municipality requested them in return to remain assembled, and not to adjourn the meeting.

Between 7 and 7.30 p.m., the cause of the Commune and Robespierre's supporters did not look unfavourable; Hanriot was soon to be liberated; the Committee had arrested his successor, nominated by the Convention, a certain cavalry officer, Aymard; many National Guards were massed on the Place de Grève; all were full of courage and enthusiasm.

The utmost excitement prevailed in the distracted city during the evening of 9 Thermidor. The chief centres of action were the Convention, the Commune, the two Committees, the Jacobin Club, and the seats of the sectional governments, where civil as well as military authorities made themselves felt. A part was likewise played on that evening by the vagrant population, which was present at all disturbances and riots.

It is most difficult to follow this struggle closely; for both parties pretended to defend the Revolution and the Terror, and both parties persisted in maintaining that there had been treason. Strangest of all was the issue. In spite of the established fact

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that Robespierre's fall was brought about by a coalition of personal enemies, it was not these conspirators who were victorious, but a party which was hardly visible—the large majority of the moderate middle classes; the Revolutionary stream was stemmed, the Terror abolished.

At seven o'clock there was great commotion throughout Paris; drums were rolling, the tocsin bursting from every steeple in the vicinity of the Town Hall and Place de Grève, men riding and running, crowding the neighbouring quays, while all kinds of armed citizens, and the gunners of the National Guards, accumulated in the square.

The Sections des Sansculottes, du Musée, and des Amis de la Patrie, had largely responded to the appeal of the Commune, and at eight o'clock in the evening seventeen companies of artillery were stationed in the square.

LXIV

THE EVENING OF JULY 27TH, 1794 (II.)

(9 THERMIDOR)

AT eight o'clock in the evening, the Place de Grève was packed with a dense mass of National Guards. Numerous Sections had obeyed the proclamation of the Commune, even the Section des Droits de l'Homme, which had at first refused its summons to take part in the revolt. The municipal council continued its sitting at the Town-Hall. Fortunately there exists an official report of the memorable meeting held on the evening and night of *Nonidi 9 Thermidor, 5 heures et demie de relevée.*[1]

Firstly, resolutions were passed in which the word "at once" (*sur-le-champ*) figured largely; reports arrived, announcing that the Convention was gravely disturbed, that large masses of rebellious people were overflowing the vicinity of the Tuileries, supported by the Jacobins, who continued their sitting all night.

The Municipal Council further resolved to set Hanriot at liberty without delay, and Coffinhal, judge of the Tribunal, and some councillors, undertook this task; they selected a few hundred gunners with twelve cannon, and a corps of gendarmes from the Place de Grève, and, joined by several volunteers,

[1] In the national archives, published by Ch. d'Héricault, *La Révolution de Thermidor*, p. 437-45 (1878).

marched to the Tuileries, halting before the chief entrance of the Pavillon de l'Horloge. The twelve cannon were drawn up against the former palace; Coffinhal, with some men, entered the Tuileries, and reached the hall of the Committee of General Safety at about half-past eight, where they found Hanriot with his aide-de-camp, Ulrick, and six officers, who were at once liberated.

It is stated that Coffinhal then tried to persuade Hanriot to attack the hall of the Convention, which could only be defended by about a hundred men—its ordinary bodyguard; no serious opposition need have been feared; with a *coup-de-main* all representatives who were present could have been arrested. But Hanriot, who was not destined to become a Cromwell or Napoleon Bonaparte, acted according to the plan which had been previously arranged by Fleuriot-Lescot and the leaders of the Commune. Terror seized the hearts of those in the Tuileries, and the members of the Committee of Public Safety rushed to the Convention, which had begun its sitting at about seven o'clock. Bourdon de l'Oise, Merlin de Thionville, Legendre, Rovère, and others, had spoken and informed the Assembly of what they had heard. President Collot d'Herbois—pale and terrified—solemnly exclaimed: "The moment has come to die at our post," and informed the Assembly that the hall of the Committee of General Safety was occupied by an armed force. The deputies trembled, for they were well aware that a hostile crowd surrounded the Tuileries, and that defence was practically impossible.

Had Hanriot appeared in the Convention at that

moment with his artillery and pacified the members by maintaining that the Assembly would be respected; had he demanded the repeal of the decrees passed that day, and the arrest of the two Committees and the leading Thermidorians;—history would have taken a different course. We should never have witnessed the sad spectacle of a struggle between honest patriots and unprincipled intriguers, in which neither party was triumphant; but in the fatal defeat of Robespierre and his friends, the conquerors themselves were vanquished by the large mass of "*modérés*," and "*indifferents*," who wished to be delivered from the Revolutionary Tribunal, the guillotine, and also from the strict moral demands of the Jacobin leaders.

Meanwhile, Hanriot allowed the favourable moment to pass, and returned to the Hôtel-de-Ville, where he was greeted with loud applause. Augustin Robespierre had already arrived before him. After being refused at the Saint-Lazare prison, he had been conducted to La Force, where two members of the Commune had demanded his deliverance in the name of the people. He had then been taken to the Town-Hall, where he was received with cheers and enthusiasm; in an eloquent speech he informed his audience by what shameful means he and his friends had been arrested, and attributed the fault of all that had taken place, not to the entire Convention, but to a few scamps who had outwitted the majority in the Assembly; hereupon the mayor, Fleuriot-Lescot, proposed to send a deputation to Maximilien Robespierre, inviting him to join in their deliberations.

We have already remarked that he was conducted

to the Luxembourg prison, where he had been refused admittance, as the Commune had issued an order that no prisoners were to be received; Robespierre himself desired to appear before his judges, but the governor refused. He was thereupon driven to the mayoralty and police station of the Quai des Orfèvres, where he found many friends among the officials, and was received with cheers. It was then about half-past eight, and twilight was setting in. Robespierre was opposed to the idea of supporting the movement which the Commune had undertaken on his behalf; he was possessed of the utmost respect for the National Assembly, of which he himself was a member, and shrank from countenancing any illegal measures. The deputation of the Commune appeared soon after at this police station, and handed him a document containing the following:

"The Municipal Council of Paris, the . . . of the second year of the French Republic, One and Indivisible. The executive Committee elected by the Council is in need of your advice—proceed there at once. The members: Chatelet, Coffinhal, Lerebours, Grenard, Legrand, Desboisseaux, Arthur, Payan, Louvet.—*The Mayor of Paris, Fleuriot-Lescot, to citizen Robespierre at the police.*" [1]

But Robespierre was not easily persuaded; he was quite conscious of his innocence: no judge could condemn him; he was not afraid of the Tribunal. Marat had been tried by that court, and Marat had been acquitted.

[1] Communicated by Ch. d'Héricault, *La Révolution de Thermidor*, p. 459 (1878).

A little later, Hanriot and Coffinhal arrived, as a second deputation from the Commune; this time he yielded, and was accompanied by the General himself to the Place de Grève. It is easy to understand why Robespierre was so unwilling to consent: by joining the revolt, which had been undertaken for his benefit, he would, in event of failure, be out of law—*hors de la loi*. But he was carried away by the boundless enthusiasm which was manifest everywhere—ready to risk even life itself in his cause. In spite of all arguments, he was forced to give way—the heart decided, not the reason.

At half-past ten the square in front of the Town-Hall was one mass of National Guards and cannon. Soon after, Saint-Just and Le Bas were liberated from their gaols, and joined the Municipal Council, which received them with enthusiastic applause. When Le Bas was removed from the Conciergerie, a touching incident took place. At the moment when the prison gates were thrown open to him, a carriage arrived with two women, who were intensely agitated. It was his wife, who had only just recovered from her confinement, and Henriette le Bas, his sister, the fiancée of Saint-Just.

They had brought various things with them for the prisoners—in particular, blankets and mattresses. When Madame Le Bas saw her husband once more at liberty, she was beside herself with joy, and insisted on accompanying him to the Hôtel-de-Ville; but as he was much concerned about her health, he begged her to go home quietly, and at the parting spoke a few words about their child:

"Do not make him hate the murderers of his father! Inspire him with love for the country. Always tell him that his father died for it. . . . Adieu, my Elisabeth, adieu!"

These words are quoted on the evidence of Madame le Bas herself, who reached the age of seventy-nine, and to the last spoke proudly of her husband:

"He knew how to die for his country; he could only die with the martyrs of liberty."

Speaking for herself, she said: "The blood that flows through my veins at seventy-nine is the blood of Republicans."

LXV

THE NIGHT OF JULY 27TH, 1794

(9 THERMIDOR)

THE revolt was considered successful, and the conspiracy defeated, when the two Robespierres, Saint-Just, Le Bas, and Couthon, were assembled in the sitting of the Commune ; and so indeed it seemed. The square in front of the Town-Hall was packed with armed friends and supporters of Robespierre ; the galleries in the Commune were crowded with inquisitives, who did not cease to applaud him.

The Municipal Council was composed of forty-eight members and ninety-six notables ; ninety-one names appeared that evening on the list, and among them were citizens holding all kinds of positions — merchants, artists, doctors, shopkeepers, *rentiers*, professors, and so on. It is possible that more were present, who prudently refrained from entering their names, and consequently saved their lives. Everything looked hopeful enough ; a great part of the population seemed to have taken the side of Robespierre and the Commune ; a colonel of the volunteers, who had cried, " Vive la Convention ! " was ill-treated by his own men, and the drabs from the back streets yelled, " All good patriots are with the Commune." A zealous councillor, who bore the strange name of Lécrivain, delivered a speech in the square :

"You must rally round the Commune with the people, the Jacobins, and Hanriot, who have sworn to defend liberty and Robespierre—the friend of the people. All those who carry orders from the Committees must be arrested, for when the tocsin sounds, the Convention is no more."[1]

Discussions in the streets were in favour of the Commune, and it was said that the Convention was the guilty party for not allowing Robespierre to speak. A few only visited the Convention, while the Town-Hall and Jacobin Club were overcrowded. The people from the faubourgs Saint-Antoine and Saint-Marceau were expected to assist the Commune, and towards midnight everything seemed to favour the movement against the Convention.

But meanwhile, nothing had been accomplished. Robespierre kept the enthusiasm of the councillors alive by his eloquence, but that was all; he did not act. The Council had ordered that the front of the building should be illuminated, and hoped that Robespierre would address the masses in the square; but he did not. A word from him to the armed sections would have been received with enthusiasm, and they would at once have marched exultingly to the Convention; but he disappointed every one. He still considered himself a member of the Convention, and, as such, objected to open a civil war against the National Assembly; but he forgot that the same Assembly had committed the greatest injustice by arresting perfectly innocent members like his brother and Le Bas.

[1] Charles d'Héricault, *La Révolution de Thermidor*, p. 463.

but who turned cowards in the face of danger. I took my seat as deputy. All members seemed to be calmly awaiting death. They surrounded me and asked what the Committees were to do. 'They are dead before they are struck,' I replied. At that moment the Committee members entered and expressed their fear for the safety of the National Assembly; they proposed to nominate me as Commander-in-Chief of the home forces and military commander of Paris. All the members rose from their seats, and the proposal was unanimously accepted. I was aware that I had but few means of suppressing the rebels, for there were no cannon. I was obliged to act, and therefore asked for the fullest confidence of those who had decided to suffer Robespierre's tyranny no longer. The Convention again rose and gave me that confidence, and all my colleagues came to shake hands or embrace me, maintaining that they relied on my complete devotion to the country. I therefore undertook the task, which was no doubt a dangerous one, for swords had been drawn, and it was now a question of victory or death. Still, it was more honourable to die on the field of battle than on the scaffold.

"My hesitation at first to accept this charge was due to my knowledge of the various men. I knew the respective worth of the two parties who confronted one another. There was not much difference between the two sides in the Committee. What could Saint-Just and Robespierre bring against Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois; and vice-versâ?"

Here the superficiality and insincerity of Barras are apparent. As we have clearly demonstrated, there was

a great difference between Robespierre and Saint-Just on the one hand, and Collot d'Herbois and Billaud-Varenne on the other. Saint-Just had rendered incalculable services on the battle-field, while Collot had made himself notorious through his outrageous conduct in Lyons, which caused the quarrel between him and Robespierre ; Billaud-Varenne had carried Robespierre with him in his attack on Danton and Camille Desmoulins, but could not forgive him for his law of June 10th and the Decree of the Supreme Being. Barras continued to maintain that both sides had alike sinned against humanity at large, in their cruel and merciless Reign of Terror ; both had applied the guillotine against perfectly innocent people, and both had selected their personal enemies as victims for the scaffold.

But this statement is equally incorrect. Robespierre was responsible for the extension of power to the Revolutionary Tribunal by the disastrous law of June 10th (22 Prairial), but if he had in reality sent his personal enemies to the scaffold, they would not have been able to ruin him by the shameless conspiracy of 9 Thermidor. Barras further states that he considered Robespierre more dangerous than the others, and for this reason he accepted the post of *Général en chef de l'Armée de l'intérieur*. As he later gave proofs of the most odious villany, these accusations cannot carry much weight. The preface by George Duruy, the learned publisher of the *Mémoires de Barras*, also show how little faith must be placed in the historical accuracy of Barras.

LXVI

THE WICKED TRIUMPH

THE feelings of the members in the Convention during the night of 9 Thermidor were far from pleasant.

The nomination of Barras as Commander of Paris, however, seemed to have an exhilarating effect ; besides, they had great confidence in those sections which were inhabited by the moderate faction, such as the Section des Tuileries, des Champs-Elysées and de la Montagne, where the mercantile classes and the well-to-do *bourgeoisie* had often shown themselves hostile to the excesses of Revolutionary enthusiasm. Barras, accompanied by Léonard Bourdon, Ferrand, Bourdon de l'Oise, Fréron, Rovère, Delmas, and Bollet, at once proceeded to call out the battalions of these sections. Elie Lacoste, a bitter enemy of Maximilien, proposed to declare *hors de la loi* (out of law) those members of the Commune who had liberated Robespierre and his friends from gaol. Hanriot was to be treated likewise ; and Vouland, of the Committee of General Safety, demanded that the measure should also be applied to Robespierre, Saint-Just, Couthon, Le Bas, and Augustin Robespierre. This also was accepted, and every one was now at liberty to take the lives of these five deputies.

Some of the members were instructed to proceed at once to the Sections and also to the Place de Grève, to proclaim that Robespierre and his friends were *hors de la loi.*

Barras and his colleagues succeeded in collecting about two thousand National Guards in the above-mentioned Sections, and decided to march them through the rue Saint-Honoré, and along the quays (Quai du Louvre, Quai de l'Ecole) to the Town-Hall.

The Commune had, meanwhile, continued its deliberations, but neglected to act. An Executive Committee had been elected, which had been energetically at work. Amongst them were two important officials, Payan and Lerebours, who bore the title of *Commissaire de l'Instruction*, and *Commissaire des secours publics.* When the ministers were dismissed, these commissioners replaced them as responsible officials.

Lerebours was a warm friend of Robespierre. During the night of 9 Thermidor he contrived to escape in the confusion, and hid in a sewer near the Champs Elysées for twenty-four hours ; he managed to leave Paris and escape to Switzerland, but returned under the Directoire, and lived until the age of ninety. He related all the events of that night in detail to his son, who in his turn communicated these to E. Hamel. This evidence is important. According to his version, which is no doubt reliable, the following events took place at the Town-Hall, when Barras and his battalions were on their way.

The Executive Committee had decided to appeal to every Section, especially to the Section des Piques—to the north of the Boulevard de la Madeleine of

to-day—which was renowned for its Jacobin sentiments. This document, which has acquired historical celebrity, was written by Lerebours. According to a *fac-simile* which appeared in the Memoirs of Barras (I., p. 195) it ran as follows :

"Commune de Paris.
"*Comité d'Exécution.*

"9 *Thermidor.* Courage, patriots of the Section des Piques. Liberty triumphs. Those who by their steadfastness have made themselves formidable to the traitors, are already at liberty ; everywhere the people shows itself worthy of its character. The place of reunion is at the Commune. . . . The brave Hanriot will execute the orders of the Executive Committee which has been formed to save the country."

This document bears the signatures of Lerebours, Payan, Legrand, and Louvet, and it was hoped that Robespierre also would sign it. At that hour—midnight—he was seated at the Council table between the mayor and Payan. Saint-Just, Augustin, and the members of the Commune, insisted that he should sign.

"In whose name?" asked Robespierre.

"In the name of the Convention, which is wherever we are," replied Saint-Just.

But he did not agree with this. Couthon, who arrived the last of all, thought that he ought to sign "in the name of the French people" ; but Robespierre still hesitated, and thus valuable time was lost.

The various deputies who had to proclaim to the people that the Commune and Robespierre were *hors*

de la loi arrived at the Place de Grève. The announcement made an unfavourable impression for the cause of the Commune, and as Robespierre remained undecided, many of the councillors prudently went home ; heavy rain set in shortly after midnight, and the inquisitive public outside the building soon followed them.

At two o'clock, when the square was nearly empty, Barras arrived with his National Guards ; a skirmish took place with the gunners, who had remained faithful to the Commune, but Léonard Bourdon and his men forced an entrance into the Hôtel-de-Ville, and appeared at the door of the hall, where the Council was sitting. He pointed with a gesture to Robespierre, who saw at last the necessity of signing the *appèl aux armes* to the Section des Piques. He was bending down over the document, and had written the first two letters of his name—*Ro*—— when a shot was fired, and he fell forward—the bullet had pierced his cheek, and his blood bespattered the paper.

This document, which was preserved by Barras, is now in the collection of Jubinal de Saint-Albin ; it proves, therefore, that Robespierre was in the act of signing his name when the bullet struck him, and is a conclusive answer to the libel which was afterwards current, that Robespierre had committed suicide. This rumour was confirmed by Thiers, but denied by Mignet, Louis Blanc, Michelet, Ernest Hamel, and also de Lescure in his *Mémoires sur les Journées révolutionnaires*. There need be no further doubt ; the facts are quite clear. Robespierre was *hors de la*

; Léonard Bourdon ordered a gendarme to shoot

him; this man, who rejoiced in the name of Merda, did not shrink from the task, as he was authorised by a member of the Convention. Léonard Bourdon—a forgotten Hébertist—was greatly embittered against Robespierre, who had frequently called him to order in the Convention for his unparliamentary language.

Besides, the report of the army surgeons who attended to Robespierre's wound stated that he could not possibly have inflicted it on himself; and lastly, he was in the act of writing his name, so that all question of suicide may be dismissed.

Many attempts have been made to represent Robespierre as a suicide, on the understanding that the deed would be much censured. At the outset this was not thought of; for when Léonard Bourdon appeared with Merda in the Convention, the latter was embraced by the president in sheer gratitude. Soon, however, his enemies assumed a different tone. Barère wrote, in his report on 10 Thermidor: "Robespierre the elder has killed himself." And afterwards Courtois, the liar, in his *Rapports sur les Evénéments de 9 Thermidor*, stated that Merda had missed Robespierre, but he had taken his own life.

LXVII

VÆ VICTIS!

AT the moment when the agonised friends of Robespierre saw him sink into his chair, the National Guards of Léonard Bourdon forced their way into the hall. An indescribable confusion prevailed; some councillors escaped, others were arrested, and a few found places of hiding.

The end had come.

Terror and despair seized the hearts of Robespierre's friends. Le Bas gave up all hope, and rushed to an adjoining room, where swords and fire-arms were stored, and, seizing a pistol, shot himself through the head; death was instantaneous, and he was buried in the morning in the churchyard of Saint Paul. Augustin Robespierre opened a window and appeared on the balcony of the large hall of the Commune. He saw that the square was thronged with National Guards, who had taken the part of the Convention, and understood that all was lost. The conqueror of Toulon, not wishing to fall into the hands of his enemies and be decapitated like a criminal, threw himself over the parapet on to the steps of the Town-Hall, and was mortally wounded. He was carried into the building, where he was tended with the greatest care; and when he was almost past speaking, he made one

last effort to declare that he and his brother had nothing with which to reproach themselves; they had done their duty to the National Assembly. By order of the Convention, he was taken in a dying condition to the Committee of General Safety in the Tuileries.

Couthon had reached the steps of the Town-Hall, and made an attempt to escape; but the poor cripple lost his balance and fell down; he was seriously injured, and was taken to the Hôtel Dieu, where his wounds were dressed by the celebrated surgeon Dessault. The Thermidorians were still afraid that he would escape, and placed a guard at the Hôtel Dieu. Hanriot managed to hide himself in the courtyard of the Town-Hall, but he was discovered, and fell, wounded, into the hands of his enemies, who carried him to the Conciergerie.

In the midst of all this confusion, Saint-Just had not ceased to tend the wounded Robespierre, and was arrested without any opposition on his part, likewise the mayor, Fleuriot Lescot, and Payan.

Coffinhal succeeded in escaping, but was betrayed by a friend a few days later. Lerebours, as we have seen, saved his life by hiding in a sewer.

The leaders of the Convention ordered that Robespierre should be conveyed to the Tuileries, whither he was carried on a stretcher, which was followed by Saint-Just and a large crowd of inquisitives. They were taken to the ante-room of the Committee of Public Safety. Dumas, who had likewise been apprehended, seated himself with Saint-Just on a window-seat while the suffering Robespierre was placed on the table, his head resting on a wooden box containing samples of bread.

He was dressed in a light blue coat and nankeen trousers; his scarf had been removed, and his shirt was soaked with the blood which flowed from his cheek. He lay for some time deadly pale and motionless, but at last opened his eyes and seized an object in reach to stop the bleeding—it was a white leathern pistol-case. Some onlookers gave him sheets of paper to wipe the blood, and he faintly thanked them with the words: "Je vous remercie, monsieur!"[1]

In his last moments, therefore, he renounced the Jacobin terms of speech, to which he had been accustomed since 1789. Saint-Just was filled with overwhelming compassion for the sufferings of his friend, and, without replying to the insults of some onlookers, regarded the tablet on which the Rights of Man were painted, exclaiming: "Nevertheless, it is I who made that!" (*C'est, pourtant, moi qui ai fait cela!*)

The conquerors sent surgeons to dress Robespierre's wounds, and he submitted with the utmost calmness to the painful operation; no complaint came from his lips—he remained passive and unmoved at the abusive language of those present. A resolution, signed by Barère, Collot d'Herbois, and Billaud-Varenne, ordered the prisoners to be conveyed to the Conciergerie, and Robespierre, his head in bandages, was removed to the gaol in a chair, surrounded by crowds of idlers. Charlotte Robespierre appeared, frantic with grief, at the Conciergerie; sobbing and on bended knees, she besought the gaolers for leave to assist her poor brothers; but she was rudely repulsed, and fainted

[1] Quoted by Michelet and Ernest Hamel on the evidence of witnesses.

away. When she recovered consciousness, she found herself likewise a prisoner.

The Revolutionary Tribunal—Dumas and Coffinhal excepted—appeared at the Convention on the early morning of 10 Thermidor to congratulate the Assembly and to ask for instructions with regard to the proscribed prisoners. Elie Lacoste proposed to restore the guillotine at the Place de la Révolution, and to execute the prisoners without any form of trial.

And so it happened that, towards five o'clock, the tumbrils once more jolted through the rue Saint-Honoré, with twenty-two victims, among them Robespierre, Saint-Just, Augustin Robespierre, Couthon, the generals Hanriot and La Valette, the mayor Fleuriot-Lescot, and some members of the Municipal Council. Couthon and Augustin Robespierre were stretched at the bottom of the cart in the agonies of death.

The utmost excitement had spread amongst the populace. Some considered Robespierre as the sole cause of the numerous executions; he was held responsible for all the blood that had been shed in consequence of the law of June 10th. Before the windows of the houses in the rue Saint-Honoré, citoyennes in gay costumes clapped their hands as the tumbrils came in sight. It is also stated that some women stopped the carts before the house of the Duplays, and danced wildly and noisily round them, whilst a child sprinkled the house with a broom dipped in the blood of an ox. The source from which this tale has sprung is rather questionable; but if it is true, it cannot have concerned the Duplays, as the

whole family had been arrested by order of the Thermidorians. It is a fact, however, that Carrier, the butcher of Nantes, who had caused thousands to be drowned, followed the cart with yells of "A mort le tyran!" He expected now to go unpunished, and rejoiced that the best and most honourable members of the Convention were led to the scaffold.

They died calmly and with dignity—Robespierre last of all. He had reached the age of thirty-five years and two months.

It is hardly necessary to dwell once more on the character and principal ideas of Robespierre. We have repeatedly referred to them. Robespierre was the advocate of the purest Jacobinism, proceeding from the philosophical fancies on political law of a *dilettante* like Rousseau. He thought that his idea of the people's sovereignty, of *les purs* and *les impurs*, of the moral principles on which the Republican legislature should be based, were to become the gospel of the future State. By this fanatical exaggeration of Rousseau's creed he had become a priest rather than a legislator.

His triumph at the Fête of the Supreme Being was the beginning of the end; his ambition to become, in a moral sense, dictator of France, stood revealed. Hence the rage of his plotting enemies; hence his highly unstatesmanlike decree of 22 Prairial—the cause of his defeat.

The champion of moderation, of justice, of humanity, suddenly resorted to a law which exercised the utmost violence over the lives of his fellow-citizens. He saw his error himself, but then it was far too late. He knew that he was lost when once he could be

accused with any semblance of truth of aiming at the dictatorship. He contradicted himself and his doctrine of the people's supremacy. Still, in spite of all, he was an honourable character, a spirit fired with the noblest ideals—but a statesman without practical ability, an obstinate fanatic, destitute of genius.

THE END.

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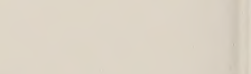

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